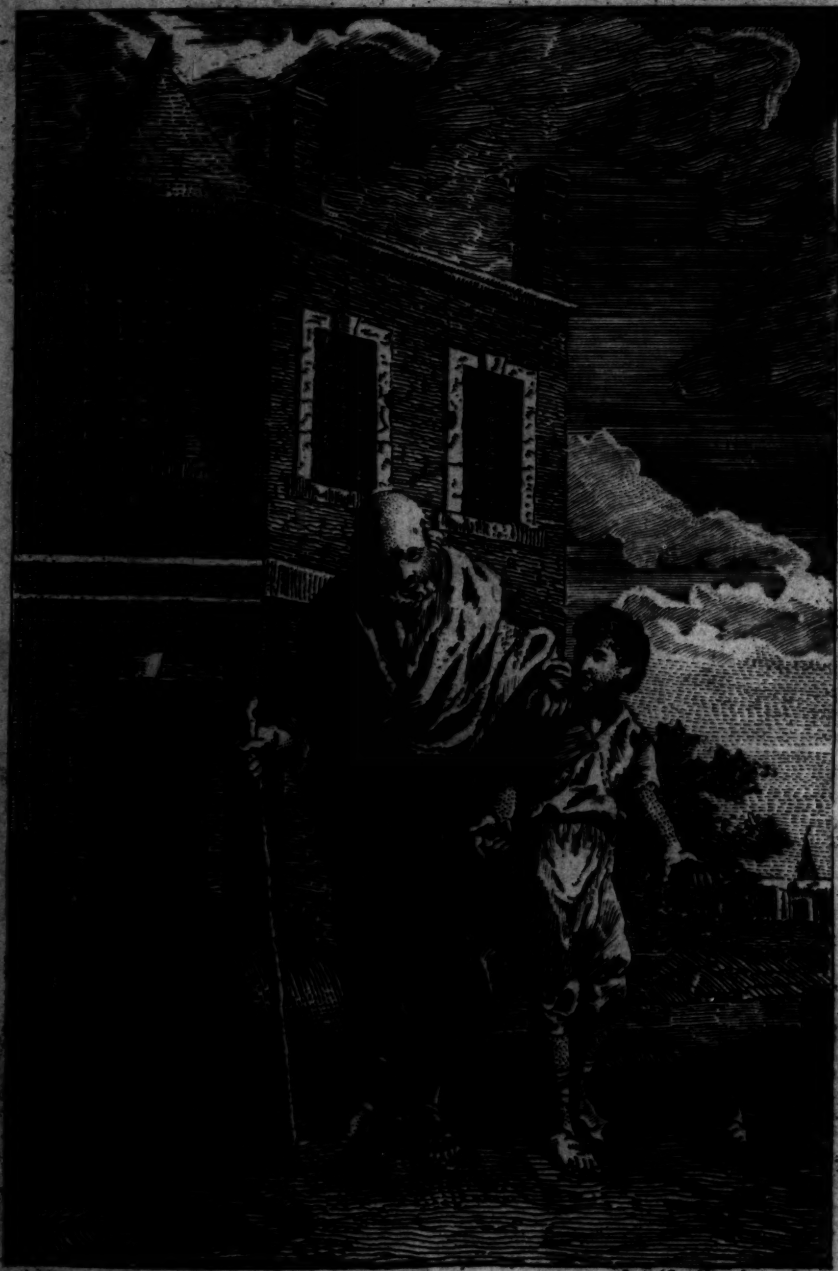
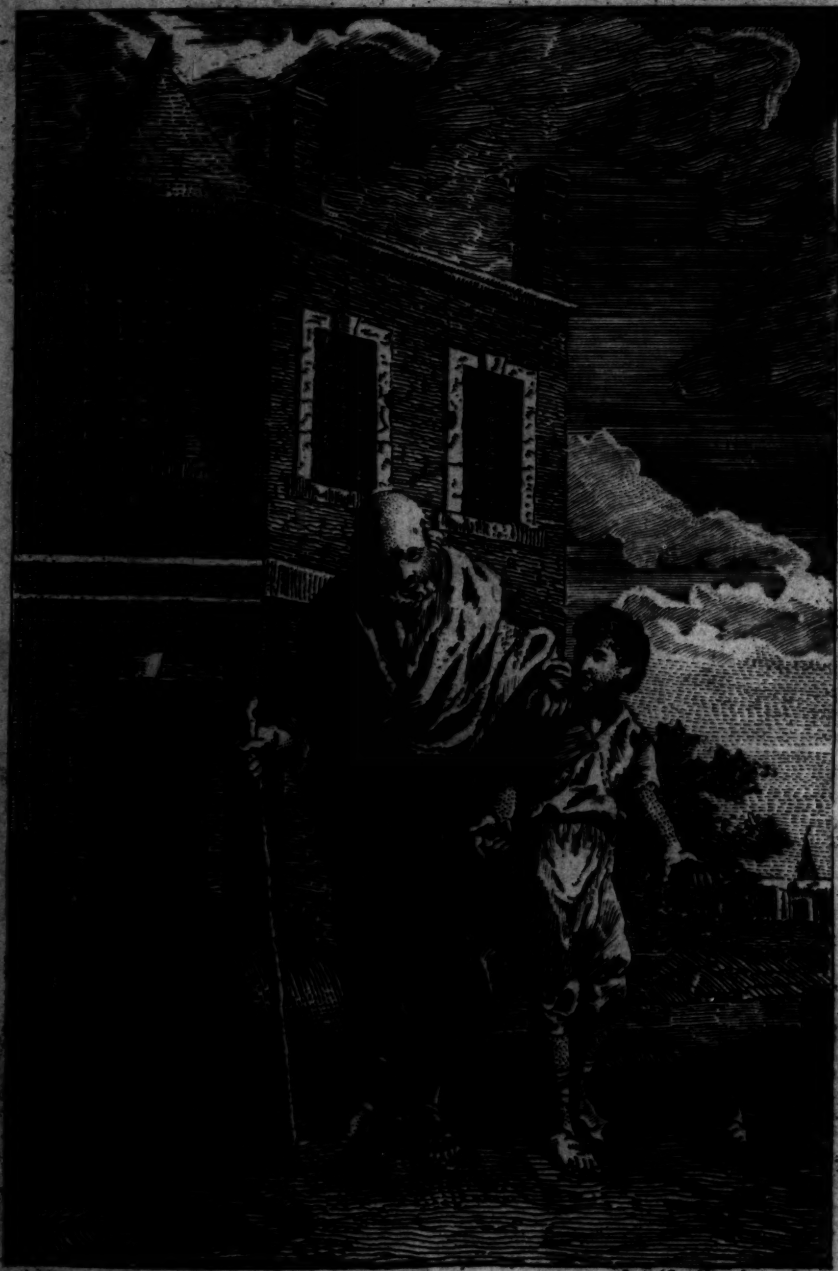




*H. Gavin Sculp.*





H. Gavin Sculp.

# BELISARIUS.

BY

J F.

K

M. MARMONTEL,

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

I DO NOT WONDER IF GOD HIMSELF SOMETIMES  
BEHOLDS WITH PLEASURE GREAT MEN STRUG-  
GLING WITH CALAMITIES.

SENECA ON PROVIDENCE.

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A NEW TRANSLATION.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for M. COOPER in Pater-Noster-Row;

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MDCCLXVIII.

TRANSLATIONS

1960



Letter to Mr. Cooper in Paris, Nov. 1890.



THE  
TRANSLATOR'S  
PREFACE.

**M**ARMONTEL, as an author, has been so deservedly admired, that any work coming from him must be well esteemed. Belisarius therefore will be universally read, not only as a romance or fashionable novel, but as a description of the customs and manners of the times. Here we see represented, in the most striking manner, the causes and reasons that occasioned the downfall of a great empire. This seems to be a work calculated for kings, ministers, and the people in

#### iv THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

general. The reader will here find Bell-farius placed in a most beautiful light; as a friend to civil and religious liberty; a brave and humane general; a statesman divested from every private interest, animated only with the love of his country; and an enemy to all persecution. What will still raise our surprise to a greater height is, to find an author, possessed with so strong a sense of liberty, born under the French government. He has been since sent to the Bastile, as a reward for this his most excellent performance.

M. MARMONTEL having added Latin notes, though from Greek authors, this being the fashion at present in France among the best writers, the translator has thought proper to translate them into English, for the benefit of those who do not understand the Latin language, which he flatters himself will be agreeable to the public in general.





THE  
AUTHOR'S  
PREFACE.

I AM certain, and ought not to dissent-  
ble, that the world may look upon  
the foundation of this little performance  
rather as a popular opinion than an histo-  
rical truth. But this opinion has been  
so prevalent, and the idea of the blind and  
begging Belisarius is become so familiar,  
that he is scarcely ever viewed but in the  
light I have placed him.

IN every thing else, except a few par-  
ticulars, I have faithfully followed histo-  
ry, and Procopius has been my guide.

But I have not paid the least regard, to that scandalous libel which is ascribed to him, under the title of ANECDOTES or SECRET HISTORY. The indigested mass of gross abuse and palpable falshood is to me sufficient evidence, that this is not the work of Procopius, but the product of some paltry declaimer, equally wicked and weak. \*

No one of the writers in the age of Procopius, none who followed him for the space of five hundred years make mention of these Anecdotes. Agathias, contemporary with our author, in enumerating his works says not a word of this. They chose to conceal it, they may tell me; yet at least three hundred years after it ought to have been published, the learned Photius should have known it:

\* An advocate of Cæsarea has been supposed to be the author. See Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions & Belles Lettres, tom. xxi.

but it is certain he never did. Suidas, a writer of the eleventh century, is the first who gives this contemptible satire to Procopius; and the most part of the learned, \* without further enquiry, have repeated what Suidas hath said. Some †, however, have doubted that this was the work of our author; some have flatly denied it, and of this number is Eichelius, in the preface and remarks on his edition of that book. He sets out with shewing, that it is neither true nor probable, that Procopius could be the author; and adds, that supposing he were, such abusive, shameful and ridiculous declamation was utterly unworthy of credit. It is indeed astonishing, that the illustrious author of the Spirit of Laws should pay such respect to a libel manifestly forged. I well know the weight of such an authority; but even that must yield to the force of truth. E

\* Vossius, Grotius, &c.

† Pere Combefils, La Mothe, &c.



# viii THE AUTHOR'S

It indeed credible that a statesman, a man much respected by the age in which he lived, merely for the pleasure of traducing them who loaded him with favours, should choose so far to disgrace himself as to oblige posterity to consider him either as a malicious libeller, or guilty of the most servile flattery? Is it credible that a writer, in other respects so judicious, could have been so totally lost to sense and shame, as to desire posterity to take, on his bare assertion, Justin, the wise and virtuous old man, for a besotted fellow, for a crazy clownish idiot: even that very Justin, who from the most obscure and meanest station in the army, by his valour and extraordinary talents raised himself to the highest office and honour, and at last by the joint suffrages of the senate, the people, and the army, was elected emperor. Who can believe that a man, who had written the history of his time with so much candour, dignity and knowledge, could thus say of



## P R E F A C E. ix

Justinian, That he was stupid and sluggish as an ass, which suffers itself to be led by the halter, and at the same time pricks up its ears? that he was not a man, but a fury? that his mother boasted of having commerce with a demon before she conceived him; and that he had done so much mischief to the empire, that no age could produce so many nor so great calamities? Is it to be believed, that after having represented Belisarius as an accomplished hero, graced with triumphs, and loaded with glory, he durst presume to paint him weak and wicked, despised by the whole world, and treated as a madman? and all this at the very time of his greatest glory, when by driving the Huns from Thrace he was acknowledged the saviour of the empire.

THOSE who imagine they can trace in the original Greek the stile of Procopius, do they at the same time discover his sagacity and good sense? Suppose him mad,

## THE AUTHOR'S

wicked and ungrateful to his benefactors; yet could he think childish declamations alone sufficient both to recall his former panegyrics, and overthrow the facts on which they were built? That the historian Procopius should seriously engage to prove in form, that Justinian and his ministers were not men, but demons in human shape? Of such inconsistent folly I should hardly believe him capable, though all his contemporary writers had attested it; much greater reason have I now to doubt, when the fact depends solely upon the dubious testimony of a single man, of a man who lived five hundred years after him.

THE work falsely ascribed to Procopius I have not at all minded: it is only his authentic history I have consulted, and from thence taken the character of my hero; his modesty, his goodness, his affability, his benevolence, his excessive artlessness;

## P R E F A C E. 11

but above all, that unparalleled humanity, the foundation of all his other virtues, and which made him the object of the people's adoration. "The citizens of Byzantium," says he †, "took the greatest pleasure in looking upon Belisarius as he walked daily forth to the forum. A comely and graceful person, a noble and majestic stature adorned this hero. So humble, so affable, so easy of access, that in these things he resembled one of the lowest rank. In munificence towards his soldiers he exceeded all. Towards the labourers and peasants his care and indulgence was such, that when Belisarius led, they followed, and felt no pain. The corn whilst in the fields he carefully protected from the injuries of the cavalry; and not a soldier durst touch the other fruits without the consent of their owners."

† Proc. de Bell. Goth. lib. iii.



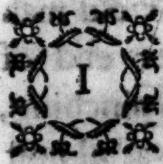
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# BELISARIUS.

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## C H A P. I.

 T was near the end of Justinian's reign, when that emperor being well stricken in age, the state, grown feeble by long and violent exertions, shewed the utmost symptoms of decay. The administration through all its departments was corrupted; the authority of the laws were trampled upon; the public treasure given up to private avarice; and military discipline quite forgotten. Distressed by a perpetual succession of wars, the emperor was at last obliged shamefully to sue for peace from the hands of his enemies; while the small remains of his armies were overcome with indolence, and grown a downright burthen to government. The com-

manders of these dispirited soldiers gave themselves up to all sorts of pleasure and debauchery; their only virtue seemed to be sometimes employed in the chase, which they imagined a resemblance of war, as they had no other expedient left to deliver them from the most deplorable state of the hypochondriacks.

ONE evening, after the diversions of the day, a party regaled themselves at a sumptuous castle in the dominions of Thrace, when an account was brought, that an old blind man, conducted by a young boy, begged of the company their hospitable relief and entertainment. The whole company being composed of youths of the most tender sentiments, the poor old man was admitted. It was now the latter end of harvest, when the season began to be pinching, and as the old venerable stranger was almost starved with cold, they courteously gave him the seat nearest the fire.

THEIR spirits being elevated by their plentiful repast, the troubles of the state became at last the subject of their discourse. An unbounded field here was opened, and disappointed vanity allowed every freedom of speech. There was not one single person in the company but who expatiated on the wonderful exploits he had already performed, and far greater that he might and would have done, had he not been



overlooked and neglected. They governed the whole world over their bottle, and thought the whole miseries of the state entirely owing to the not employing men of their sagacity, discernment, and discretion.

THE venerable old gentleman at the side of the fire, attentive to this club of politicians, shewed a countenance of pity, mingled with smiles. One of the company observing it, venerable sir, says he, you seem to be diverted with our conversation. — Diverted! replied the worthy old man; pardon me, Sir, not very agreeably; it is light and frothy, nothing else being to be expected at your time of life. The whole company were surprised at his answer. I make no doubt, continued he, but every one of you think your complaints well founded, and that you never deserved to be overlooked; but that is a principle founded upon the love each individual has for himself, and therefore ought not to be the subject of your complaint. Lament therefore and be sorrowful, that the empire has lost all its strength and dignity, and that the prince, weighed down with old age, is obliged to hear and see through unfaithful servants, not being in a condition to see and judge for himself in so general a calamity. 'Tis below patriotick principles to think only of yourselves. — That was the fashion of the times of old, I fancy, re-

plies one of the young striplings at table; every one was so virtuous as to think nothing of himself; but the mode is altered now, and every man thinks only for himself. The venerable stranger replied, if that be the case, you are very properly rewarded; you deserve nothing else but neglect. What do you mean! said the young gentleman to whom this speech was addressed, after our admitting you into our company, and regaling you with our repast, do you affront us in this manner? Very far from it, replied the venerable old man, all the return I can make for your favours, is to repay them with honest truth.

THE young Tiberius happening to be one of the company, was struck with the wise observations of the hoary headed stranger, and said, I must confess that your observation is founded on wisdom, but it is mixed with a great degree of spleen; and the public spirit which you recommend is without doubt a virtue, but I can by no means call it a duty.—The good old man replied, in the tone of a commanding strain, it is the basis of your duty, and the foundation of all the military virtues. Whosoever becomes a patriot, and would dedicate himself to the service of his country, should consider it as insolvent: though he meets with an ungrateful return, yet he must always esteem himself

fully recompensed by the voice of the public, though the caprice or bad principles of the minister should endeavour to depress him. The common soldier, I must own, may, for the sake of daily bread, and the booty that he may sometimes get, hazard his life for this small reward. This observation has frequently been made; but you, Sir, being born a gentleman, with whom to live is to enjoy, when you leave the softer scenes of life, and expose yourself to all the fatigues and troubles of war, it is to be supposed you do it upon a far nobler and better principle; that you esteem neither titles, rank, nor the favours of the sovereign, by giving yourselves up to the service of the public: but if, on the contrary, you value these more than the public, you are no more than the meanest slave. I make no doubt but all you young gentlemen will chuse what agrees best with the inclinations of your own minds. The company replied, according to your way of arguing, you seem to place sovereigns in a very easy condition. The blind stranger replied, if I was to address myself to sovereigns, I should tell them, that as it is your duty to behave in a disinterested manner, so is it theirs to be upright and just. What then, is it not just to give merit its just recompence?—Most certainly it is; but who receives the service, ought to dispense the reward;



and if he omits to do it, it is his fault. But to pursue the argument still a little further: if each of us was to weigh our own merits, are we sure we should hold the balance with an even hand? To make this appear in a more striking light; in order that every one should receive enough to satisfy his utmost wishes, it would be necessary that every one should have the chief command, and then what becomes of subordination? This, you see, can never be accomplished. I will therefore fix it as an unvariable truth, that government may sometimes want penetration, and even equity; but still it will be more wise and discerning, and more equal in its appointments, than if it was to depend intirely upon the character, that each candidate would give of himself. — The young master of the feast, being displeased at this discourse, in an angry tone, said, pray, who are you, who talk to us in this manner? — Belisarius, replied the good old man.

THEY were all seized with astonishment and surprize at the name of him, who had conquered so often in three parts of the globe; they were so confounded, that they hung down their heads with blushing countenances, not minding that Belisarius was blind. Tiberius at length spoke: O illustrious general! thou to whom the whole empire has been o-

bliged for thirty years for its splendor and flourishing condition, how art thou requited for all thy labours and fatigues! charged with high treason, loaded with irons, and punished with the loss of thy sight!—And yet, tho' thus inhumanly treated, you still continue to recommend the principles of public liberty and the heroick love of your country.—Belisarius replied, from whom are you to learn such lessons? not surely from the slaves of a court; they will never talk in this strain. Oh! abominable ingratitude! said Tiberius, interrupting him; distant ages will never give credit to the sad tale!—I must confess, said Belisarius, that I was somewhat taken on a surprize; for tho' I had made death familiar, and would have gloried in dying in the service of my country, I never expected to be punished in this manner; but there is no great difference between death and blindness. However, what is most valuable, still remains with me; the virtues of my heart, my character: the services I have done a court, may be forgot, but my actions will be remembered by distant ages and nations.

THE company now, fired with admiration, begged of him that he would sit at the table. Forgive me, gentlemen, says he, at my time of life the most comfortable place is, being

seated near the fire. They however, shewed him all possible marks of regard, and pressed him to accept the best bed in the castle; but he would accept of nothing but straw. I however, will accept of your favours for this poor boy, who leads me, as such a bed will, perhaps, not agree so well with his health.

NEXT morning, by break of day, Belisarius left the castle before his friends were stirring. As soon as they arose, they proposed going in search of him, to furnish him with the means of making the journey more easy and comfortable to him. But Tiberius opposed this measure, for this reason that he imagined Belisarius would not lay himself under any obligation to them.

IN the afternoon, one of Tiberius's friends came to him from the emperor, to whom he recited, in the most moving and affectionate manner, the substance of what had passed the evening before. Upon which, Justinian hearing of it, desired an interview with Tiberius. Tiberius, having narrated the whole, added, it is impossible, Sir, that a mind fraught with such noble sentiments, could descend so low as to be guilty of the conspiracy laid to his charge. I could pawn my life for his, that he is innocent.

THE emperor Justinian, charmed with this



relation, was desirous of an interview, and begged Tiberius immediately to find him out, and bring him to his castle; which command Tiberius received with joy, and immediately set out in search of the venerable old general.



CHAP. II.

**B**ELISARIUS, having given charge to his guide, not to mention his name, or who he was, tho' his majestick countenance every where spake in his favour, travelled on, begging his bread, towards the old ruinous castle, where his family expected him. Arriving that night at a village, his guide stopped at a house, which, by its appearance promised a hospitable reception.

THE master of the house was entering, with a spade in his hand: Belisarius's venerable aspect soon raised his curiosity to know, who he was. A poor old veteran, says Belisarius, an infirm old soldier!—A soldier! replies the master of the house, and I suppose that honour is your recompence!—It cannot be helped, says Belisarius; 'tis the greatest hardship upon a king, that he is unable to pay for all the blood

spilt in his service. This reply so warmed the heart of the master of the house, that he pressed Belisarius to accept of his frugal repast.

THE master of the house then introduced him to his wife; here, my dear, is a brave old veteran, who bears up under his misfortunes with a becoming fortitude of mind, and told him to go forward, saying, be not concerned nor ashamed of your condition in a family, who have partaken of their share of misfortunes. Sit down, and till supper is made ready, pray, let me know what wars you have served in? In the wars of Italy, Asia and Africa, replied Belisarius.

THIS relation stole a deep sigh from the master of the house. If this be true then, you was in every campaign with Belisarius?—Yes, every campaign; we were never separate. Was he not a man, whose soul was filled with every sentiment of honour, conduct and fortitude? Pray, is he still living? for I have been in this solitude upwards of twenty-five years, and have never heard what is doing in the world.—Yes, Belisarius is still alive —O heaven, replied the master of the house, prolong his days!—I make no doubt but he is greatly carressed at court; and adored by every body. He is far gone in years now, but I make no

doubt, he will be as great in council now as formerly he was in the field; and if his advice is taken, it may be of more extensive use, than his valour was formerly. Belisarius, upon hearing this, was inwardly softened and charmed, and asked, How did you know Belisarius? Supper being now on the table, said the villager, your question will take too much time in answering at present, but when we are done, I will oblige you with an answer.

FROM those hints already thrown out, Belisarius imagined his landlord must be some officer, who might have formerly served under him, and was pleased with his general. The master asked several questions during supper, of the particulars of the wars in Italy and the East, but made not the least mention of those in Africa. Belisarius in a plain and easy style satisfied his curiosity. At the conclusion of the repast, let us drink, says the host, to the health of the general, and may God repay him with his best blessings for all the evil he heaped on me!—Belisarius replied with some emotion, did he injure you?—I make no complaint, he only performed his duty. And in this school of adversity I have learned to compassionate the distresses of my fellow mortals. As you have served in Africa, you must have seen the king of the Vandals, the



unfortunate Gilimer, led in triumph, with his wife and family by Belisarius into Constantino-ple. You are now under the hospitable roof of this unfortunate Gilimer! Is this possible? replied Belisarius; has the emperor not placed you in a better state?—Yes, to do him justice, he made very high offers; but to him who has been a king, and lost his crown, the only consolation is a calm and lonely retreat from the world.—And art thou Gilimer! replied Belisarius—Yes, I am that vanquished prince, who was besieged on the mountain of Papua, in the winter season.\* So watched by that brave officer Pharas, till we were reduced to the utmost extremity of despair, were ready to devour our wives and children. Though he never ceased to put me in mind of my miseries, and this, with the confidence I had in the virtues of your general, made me at last lay down my arms. With what a noble, generous and commiserating manner did Belisarius receive me! and both by his own example and command did all in his power to alleviate my misfortunes! It is near the space of six lustres since I have lived in this solitary retreat, and every revolving sun has heard my prayers for Belisarius.

I ADMIRE your philosophical turn of mind,

\* See Procop. *de Bello Vandalico*, lib. II.

replied Belisarius, that would make you bear up in so chearful a manner on that cold mountain, which gave you that lofty and serene air of contempt, when you appeared before Belisarius; and on his day of triumph gave you that air of magnanimity, which surprized all the beholders, even Justinian himself. My worthy guest, replied Gilimer, every thing that happens to us is really no more than what we esteem it to be. If we consider the world as a changeable thing, this will be a source of true fortitude. In my former prosperity I had lived the most voluptuous of kings, and from the highest degree of pleasure was tumbled headlong from my palace to a \* Moorish prison, where I was obliged to repose my distressed body upon straw, thankful for the meanest and coarsest fare, tho' I received it from the hand of an enemy. From this situation I was brought into captivity, loaded with chains, and obliged to grace the conqueror's triumph. Under so much calamity, the heart must either break, or rise superior to all the frowns of fortune.

A COMPOSED soul, replied Belisarius, will find many resources; and, I hope, to add one more, to the many you have had, before we part.

\* See Procop. de Bello Vandalico, lib. II.

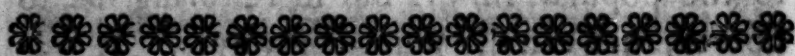
It being now late, they both retired to sleep. In the morning, Gilimer, at the break of day, made it his first business to enquire how his venerable guest had rested all night. He found him ready dressed, with his stick in his hand, fit to set out on his journey. He was surprized at this, having flattered himself, that he should have had the pleasure of the company of his brave old guest for a few days. Belisarius thanked him for his kindness, but desired to be excused, informing him, that he had a wife and daughter, who were miserable during his absence. Farewel! and hear without surprize, what remains to be told you: old and blind as I am, Belisarius will never forget the kind entertainment you have given him.--- Belisarius!—you astonish me!—Yes, it is Belisarius who now embraces you!—Gracious heaven!—says Gilimer, wilt thou ever allow Belisarius to be both blind and deserted in his old days!—It is so, replied Belisarius; his enemies to add to their other cruelty, put out his eyes, before they turned him off to beg his way thro' the world!—You surprize me! says Gilimer; and, pray, who were those cruel monsters, that could be guilty of such shocking barbarity?—Malicious and envious men accused me of designs upon the crown, when my whole ambition was fixed upon hea-



ven. They had so much credit as to ruin me, and I was confined in prison in irons. The people at length grew outrageous for my enlargement; and they were obliged to give way to the popular fury; but in restoring me to liberty, they cruelly put out my eyes. It was by the consent of Justinian, that this was done; this wound struck me to the very heart! You was a witness of the zeal and affection, with which I served him. And notwithstanding all this, I love and pity him, that he should be surrounded with such vile sycophants, who will make the evening of his days set in darkness. I must confess, my constancy failed me, when I understood, that he had passed the definitive sentence. The executioners themselves were moved with pity, and prostrated themselves at my feet. Now, thanks be to God! all is over; I have but little time to crawl about blind as I am. I am contented—Spend that time then with me, says Gilimer, under this hospitable roof: all I have is at your command. Belisarius thanked him, but told him the ties of natural affection obliged him to expire in the arms of his family.

GILIMER parted with him, with great reluctance, his eyes following him, till he was quite out of sight. O worldly grandeur! what a delusion art thou! thou art not to be trusted,

when the great, the venerable Belisarius, is in such a condition!—The poor peasant is more happy, who digs in his garden, than those who are possessed of the greatest honours.



## C H A P. III.

**B**ELISARIUS had now almost reached the old castle, where his family recided, who expected him with the utmost impatience, when an unlucky accident happened, that made him fearful he should never reach it. The inhabitants upon the borders of the empire were continually making incursions into Thrace. A troop of Bulgarians had made an incursion at that time, when the report first was made public, that Belisarius, being punished with the loss of his eye-sight, was discharged from prison, and was journeying to the habitation of his family. The prince of Bulgaria imagining from the cruelty Belisarius had suffered, that he would join with any prince, who would revenge his wrongs, got intelligence of the road he had taken, and orders were dispatched, to watch him in his march. Near the evening, Belisarius was overtaken: he had no power to make resistance; they obliged him to

mount a superb horse they had for that purpose, and his guide rode behind one of the conductors. You may safely trust yourself with us, said they; the king our master has the greatest regard for your virtues, and is sorry to hear of the unjust treatment you have met with. Belisarius asked them what their prince could want with him. He designs, replied they, to punish your enemies very severely. Ah! says the old worthy hero, I want no revenge; his pity I esteem as a piece of cruelty; I only want to die in the arms of my family, and you keep me from them. I want only rest, as I am quite worn out with fatigue. That you shall have immediately, replied they, if the master of a castle in view is not upon his guard, and has not too strong a force to be attacked.

THE castle was the habitation of an old avaricious courtier, who, when he commanded in the army, had been guilty of the most unheard of cruelties and robberies, by which he had acquired ten thousand talents.\* This was one of whom Belisarius had complained; but he, joining with more of the same wicked disposition, had evaded the force of the laws, and lived upon the spoils of others with impunity.

THE party who were sent to reconnoitre reported, that all was mirth and dissipation in

\* About 250,000 pounds sterling.



the castle, on receiving the news that Belisarius was punished in such a manner. Ungrateful wretch! replied they, he shall not long triumph in this manner.

Bessus was at table in the midst of his sycophants and flatterers, who were sporting with the calamities of Belisarius, thinking it a judgment sent from heaven upon him for his crimes. By this time the Bulgarians had taken possession of the court-yard, sword in hand, leaving Belisarius with a reserved guard, while the main body forced themselves into the banqueting-room, when Bessus and his company were obliged to surrender, and abjectly to beg their lives. They were all brought forth to the place where Belisarius was. When Bessus, observing Belisarius on horseback, he immediately knew him, and intreated for mercy. Belisarius pleaded much in their behalf, but was refused; the commander having positive orders to dispatch them all as being bad men. The servants of the family expected the same fate; however, the commander ordered them to attend, while he and his followers, with Belisarius, were regaling themselves.

BELISARIUS now began to harangue the Bulgarians. It gives me great pain, said he, that the blood of my countrymen should be so wantonly spilt. Bessus, it is true, was a cove-

rous and rapacious man; he has sometimes been the author of a famine in Rome, by his forestalling the markets, and, without any feelings for the poor, selling it out again at a most exorbitant price. The justice of Heaven has at last overtaken him, and I am only sorry that he deserved such a death: but yet the junction of its having been done in my name, will be an eternal stain upon my honour; and I beg you will either dispatch me, or do nothing of this barbarous nature while I am in your company. They promised they would not, and set forward next day with the plunder they had got at Bessus's castle.

WHEN they arrived at their prince's camp, the head commander in a transport of joy embracing Belisarius, said, Come, thou heroic old general, and see whether we Barbarians have not better sentiments of true honour than your ungrateful countrymen! Imprisoned, punished, and now abandoned by the state you so faithfully served, you will find among us those who will revenge your cause. After a sumptuous feast, at which the name of Belisarius resounded with loud acclamations, the king desired a private audience with him in his tent. Illustrious old general, said he; I must not expatiate upon the barbarous treatment you have met with; but, notwithstanding that they have put

out your bodily eyes, they have no power over the eyes of the mind. You have still wisdom; you shall be my counsellor and prime minister; by your advice and direction I shall be able to exterminate them, and not leave the least trace of them upon earth. If you are not satisfied with being the greatest man in my dominions, you shall share the government with me, and let the tyrant of Byzantium see you after you have totally routed him, make your triumphant entry into his imperial city. After a short pause, Belisarius replied, It is a long time since I was tempted with royal dignity; both Carthage and Italy were in my offer. Though I was then young, and therefore a more proper subject for ambition to work upon; though then I saw persecution rearing its head against me, yet I remained faithful to my prince and country; and therefore should I accept your offer now, I should justify Justinian my sovereign, for all the miseries he has made me suffer. When I promised allegiance to the emperor, I hoped to find him just; I made no reservation if I found him otherwise, to avenge my own quarrel. I am incapable of treason, and at my time of life, after all my best advice, you might fail in your hopes and expectations, and then you might, with good reason, reflect upon me. The present appearance of things makes the emperor

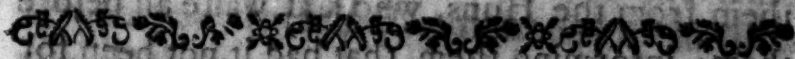


appear an easy conquest; but an enterprize like yours would perhaps rouse him from his languor, and animate his mind with new life and vigour. Besides, the city has numbers of people inured to war, with many noble commanders equal to Belisarius, when in his prime; the great Narses, Mundus, Hermes, and Salomon. But if you take my advice, leave the whole to time; Providence will bring about the downfall of that great empire. I own you may make inroads into his dominions, but this I esteem only the work of robbers. Justinian can easily form alliances with the neighbouring princes: there are none of them but what will be fond of an alliance with him, and perhaps you, even yourself, would be fond of an alliance with him. No, said the Bulgarian, I never will hold alliance with such an ungrateful man, who owes his all to you, and yet has rewarded you so ill for it. But the question at present between us is, whether you will reign in concert with me or not? My life is in your hands, replied Belisarius; but nothing can ever shake the fidelity I owe my lawful sovereign: and was I capable of serving him now, all the bad usage I have had would excite me the more to do him service. Yours is an extraordinary sort of virtue, replied the Bulgarian prince. Those people who imagine it extraordinary, replied Belisari-

us, must be in a dreadful condition. The right of nature being conferred on the chief magistrate, this is the only foundation of good order and society, that no member should be his own judge and avenger : and was it otherways, every discontented spirit would be a rebel; and surely you who now court me to punish my master, will not give the same privilege to your own subjects? They all have it, replied he, but fear restrains it within due bounds. Belisarius replied, with us virtue is the only restraint, and this is the parent of social happiness. What sort of subjects do you govern? a people used to rapin and plunder; this is their best resource, and this banishes every notion of the right use of peace, and makes them neglect the only resources of the valuable riches of labour and industry; and their only hopes of advancing themselves seems to be in the ruin and destruction of their neighbours. But please observe the consequences of your boundless ambition to lay waste the empire; you must leave your own territories without labourers, barren and uncultivated; by which means, in order to maintain the one half of the human species, you must massacre the other, and your own subjects blood must fatten the land they cover with desolation. The end of all wars ought to be to enjoy the fruits of peace, as the purchase of all our

victories. Let us break off our discourse, said the Bulgarian, as generosity is easily extended where we have superior force. I observe you are still illustrious, even in your present melancholy situation, and your firm loyalty deserves a better recompence. The best tent is provided for you near our person: repose yourself this night, and to-morrow direct your guide to conduct you where you please to be.

THE next day they parted, after the king had offered him many large presents, which Belisarius refused with a becoming constancy, as being the spoils of his country. All he could be forced to accept, was only necessary food for him and his guide; and the same party that brought him conducted him again safe on his road.



CHAP. IV.

**B**ELISARIUS was now within twelve miles of the old castle where his family lived; he took leave of his convoy, and being wearied with his journey, took up at the next village.

UPON his arrival, he heard several voices, saying, *Here he is; that is he to be sure.* He



could not understand what this could mean. His guide informed him it was a whole family coming to meet him, the master of which accosted him in this manner: Venerable gentleman, may we ask who you are? You may easily see, replied Belisarius, that I am a poor mean beggar, and not a gentleman. A poor beggar! replied the old villager; that is what occasions our curiosity, for we are informed, mean as you appear, you are Belisarius. Speak lower, says he, and if my misfortunes move your pity, give me a lodging in your house; which the honest countryman immediately complied with.

UPON coming into the house, he informed his son and two daughters who the stranger was, and commanded them to return him the most grateful thanks for formerly protecting them from the Huns, who laid waste all before them; informing them, that had it not been for Belisarius, their little habitation would have been burnt; their children killed before their faces; so that their all would have been totally destroyed. Let us make him all the recompence in our power, and lament for his misfortunes.

BELISARIUS was sensibly touched with the grateful sentiments of this little family, and could only answer them by mixing tears with his embraces. The two fond mothers present-

ed each their child, placing them on the general's knees. The little infants smiled in his face, and raising their arms seemed to offer up their thanks. And do you now, said Belisarius, think me an object of compassion? Is there a happier man breathing than myself? But let me know how you came to have any knowledge of me? The old man replied, a young nobleman passed through this place yesterday, and asked us if we had seen such a person, describing you, and desired us to watch your coming, and let you know that a friend of yours expected you at the place you were going to. We desired to be excused the office, as we could not neglect our business to look after blind beggars. Upon which, he promised to repay us for all our trouble, at the same time informing us who you were, and commanded us to shew you all the regard in our power, informing us of your sufferings. At the sound of your name, our hearts leapt for joy. My son watched all night for his worthy general; for he formerly fought under your banner, when you drove out the invaders of Thrace. My daughters took their post at dawn of day, and have been waiting with eager expectation ever since. To our inexpressible joy we have now found you; therefore command every thing in our power to grant you: no doubt the young noblemen has more

in his power to give, but he cannot do it with a better heart, or entertain you with more hearty welcome.

WHILE the father thus talked to the general, the son stood motionless with surprise; his countenance displayed the different passions that moved in his breast.

My worthy friend, replied Belisarius to the old labourer, I am obliged to you for the tender marks you shew of your gratitude. I have abundance to support me on my journey; but let me know if your happiness is equal to your generosity? you say your son carried arms under my command, I hope he behaves in a dutiful and industrious manner? Is he a good husband, and a good father? He is all my comfort, replied the old man; he left the army on the death of his brother: the honourable scars he has bear testimony of his valour. He relieves me from labour, and is the staff of my old age; he is of a robust disposition, and his wife of an amiable mild temper. I married one daughter to a virtuous young man, and they live together with mutual happiness: every thing goes on to my heart's content. They have begotten children, and in them I fancy I am renewing my age. This makes me rejoice at the thoughts of my dissolution, hoping that they will be an honour to my memory. I envy your conditi-



on, said Belisarius. I had two sons; they both expired at my side; I had placed my future joys and hopes upon them. I have only one daughter remaining, and she has too much sensibility for her condition and my own. But, blessed be God, my two boys died fighting in defence of the liberties of their country! The young man, who had been listening all this while with the utmost attention, found his soul all on fire.

THE supper, consisting of plain country cheer, being served up, Belisarius entered into lavish encomiums on the happiness of a retired state of life, to which the great are so much strangers. The young soldier continued silent all the time of supper, with his eyes fixed on his good old general; and the more his attention was fixed, the deeper gloom overspread his countenance: My son, said the old villager, is here recalling to his memory all your battles; he observes you with an attentive eye. I make no doubt, says Belisarius, but he finds it difficult to recollect his general. The enemies of my general, says the young soldier, have let loose their malice to deface him; but he is too near the hearts of his soldiers ever to be forgot by them.

WHEN Belisarius took leave of this good family, the young soldier desired that he might have the honour of conveying him part of the road. As they passed along, he desired that

the young guide might go before, as he had something material to communicate to his general. The condition they have left you in, says he, fills me with indignation, so that I look with horror on my country; as I formerly fought boldly in her service, so now I repent every drop of blood I spilt in her cause. My house is become detestable to me, and I look with pity on the children I have brought into this bad world. Is there any country, replied Belisarius, where sometimes real goodness receives not ungrateful treatment for its reward? The young soldier replied, the outrage they have committed on you is far beyond any thing that was ever done in any country. Pray, who was the author of it? nothing shall stop me from tearing out the villain's heart. I will immediately leave my wife and children to the care of Providence, and set out to revenge your cause. I admire your brave and generous conduct, says Belisarius, clasping him in his arms, but I cannot consent that so brave a man should become a murderer. Reflect a little, you are the staff of your old father, the support of your wife and children, therefore do not hazard your life for a decrepid old fellow like me; this will not either restore my sight or my youth again. I know that, replied the young soldier; but this example of vengeance executed upon

a villain, will strike terror into every guilty mind. I will seize the madman, and, though he had hold of the horns of the altar, or were prostrate at the feet of the monarch, will strike my dagger into his heart, and thunder in his ear, *Belisarius strikes the blow.* Belisarius replied in an angry tone, pray what right have you to do this? Have I transferred any right over to you, which I have not myself? or do you mean to assume a right in defiance to every law? If the law was truly and justly administered, said the young man, the subject would depend upon the justice of his country; but since there is so little regard paid to the cause of innocence and virtue, it is time to abjure civil society, and natural justice ought to take place. My brave fellow, replied Belisarius, this is talking like a lawless ruffian! To see the laws perverted to bad purposes, is indeed grievous; but it would be still more grievous were they to suffer open violation. The total overthrow of laws would be worse than an infeebled constitution. You think it best to strike guilt with terror, and yet you are going to encourage it by your own example. I see you are sensibly touched with my misfortunes, but let it never be said, that virtue guided the hand of a murderer.

HAD their cruelty, replied the young soldi-



er, been wrecked upon me, I would have forgiven it, and bore it with fortitude; but when it has fallen upon so great, so good a man as Belisarius, it makes me quite tremble to think of it. I must revenge, I cannot forgive it! Belisarius replied, I am sensible that it is nothing but my interest, that provokes you; but let me tell you, if I wanted to revenge my wrongs, whole nations are at my command. My advice to you is to keep your life for any glorious occasion that may happen, to lay it down in the service of your country, and fight for your prince.

THOSE words abated the ardour of the young soldier. Forgive me, noble general, said he, it was the outrage committed upon you, which drove me to this hasty resolution; I hope, therefore you will excuse my overheated zeal. Belisarius replied, I not only forgive, but admire the noble emotions of your generous soul; your family will stand in need of your advice and protection; let your children imbibe from you an aversion to the enemies of Belisarius, who are the Scythians, the Huns, the Bulgarians, the Slavonians, the Persians, and all the enemies of my country.—Thou miracle of virtue, replied the young soldier, my children shall grow up in hatred from their cradle against them, and as inevitable e-

vils mix in all states, all the good man can do, is not to deserve the portion, that may be his lot; whenever I see the laws perverted, and the prosperity of bad men should move my indignation, I will think on Belisarius.



CHAP. V.

**A**S the heroic soul of Belisarius was now upon encountering a more severe trial than ever he had yet met with, he stood in need of more philosophy to encounter it. It will in this place be proper to give an account of what happened to him, when he was first seized, and hurried to prison.

ON the night he was at first thrown into jail, and loaded with irons, all his domesticks were struck with consternation; and the agony and despair into which his wife, Antonina, and his only daughter, Eudoxa, were thrown, are better to be imagined than described. However, Antonina from the great intimacy, that had subsisted between her and the empress, and the many favours she had received from her hand, flattered herself, that her apprehensions were not well founded; and that Theodora at least would use her utmost efforts in her favour.

With this hope, she attended the levee of the empress, and in the most humble posture, in the face of the whole court, desired, that as Belisarius had so often saved and defended the empire, that he might have a fair and open trial; and that his enemies might be confronted with him. Theodora desired her to rise, and with cold and indifference replied; if Belisarius is not guilty, he has nothing to fear, and if it should prove otherwise, his master's well known clemency will plead in his favour. Antonina was struck dumb with this cold reception, and particularly with the conclusion of it; she returned in the utmost distress and trouble. She met Barsames, who would, if possible have shunned her, had she not spoke to him; he was the first lord of the treasury, and the favourite of the empress. She desired him to inform her, what crime Belisarius was charged with. Barsames replied, I am totally ignorant; I make it wholly my business to attend to the duties of my station, and would every officer of the crown do the same, the peace of the world would not be so much disturbed as it is.

ALAS! says Antonina, Belisarius is undone; I fear the plot is deeper laid than I imagined. A few steps after she met another, who was wholly indebted to her for the post he enjoy-



ed; he would not condescend so far as to hear her, but put her off with a cold compliment, said he was sorry for her misfortunes, but was so hurried with business, that he could not stop to speak with her. Soon after which, the order came for her and her daughter, to be banished to the old castle, where we left them.

ANTONINA was so filled with grief at the sight of this old castle in ruin, that it threw her into a fit of sickness. Soon after she came to it, the beautiful Eudoxa's heart felt the utmost distress at the thoughts of her father laid in chains, and her mother seized with sickness, and ready to break her heart with anguish. Those thoughts not only employed her waking hours, but even her slumbers were disturbed by horrid dreams.

ANTONINA, having been brought up at court, knew how little souls, who have no virtue of their own, would rejoice and exult at the oppression and fall of so great a man as Belisarius! Oh, my daughter! said she, you have nothing to blame yourself for; your father's advice in the midst of all the flattering honours of a court, were little regarded by me: he in vain counselled me to beware of courts, and place the whole of my happiness in simplicity of manners; still insisting, that

there was more pleasure to be found in domestick happiness, than in all the gaudy splendor of a court. I considered his advice only as the effects of spleen; and his sullen humour, as I imagined it was, I have sometimes complained of to his very enemies. Alas! how have I been deceived! I never saw the precipice, till I was upon the brink of tumbling headlong from it. If you knew, my dear child, how I was seized, when I saw how the countenance of the empress was changed; who before was intirely ruled by my advice! and with what a cold disdainful air she dismissed me from her presence, you would have been struck with consternation! That court, who the evening before smiled, with a general complaisance, now seeing I had lost favour, and was expelled from it, not one of them seemed to know me, but every one shunned me as a plague.

A WHOLE year passed without any news of Belisarius; a conspiracy was said to be found out, the good old general was said to be the author of it. His enemies, being his judges, easily found him guilty of the treason, as all the principals of the conspiracy had suffered without confessing any thing of their leader; this they considered as a presumptive evidence, that it must be he: therefore he was suffered to lie neglected, in a loathsome dungeon, hop-

ing that death would save them the trouble of bringing him to a fair trial. The old disbanded soldiery, who had always observed Belisarius's faithful and valiant services, now being mixed with the people, an universal clamour arose, which at last terminated in a popular insurrection; they demanded he might be brought to a trial. The very soldiery, being vouchers for his innocence, they threatened to force the prison doors, unless he was immediately set at liberty. This tumult enraged the emperor and the empress. Theodora perceiving it, and as she knew the emperor was incapable of justice when he was in a passion, got him to sign the horrid decree, to put out his eyes, which was immediately done. Now, says she, let them have their darling general, since he is no longer able to command them.

A LOUD noise of rage and tumult filled the city, when they saw that brave old general come forth, with both his eyes out. Belisarius stilled the tumult. My friends and fellow soldiers, said he, the emperor has been imposed upon; every man is liable to be misguided; it is our only business now to lament, and be sorry for Justinian's anger, and to be dutiful to him still; my uprightness and innocence are now the only consolation left me; let me enjoy



this. The rebellion you threaten, will never restore my eye-sight, but it will deprive me of the only pleasure I have left. This sound reasoning, delivered by the illustrious hero, in a pathetick tone, soon appeased the noise of the people. They offered him all the riches they were possessed of. Belisarius returned them thanks for their kind offers; but, says he, I desire nothing but one of your boys, to lead me to the castle, where my family expects me.

THE adventure Belisarius had with the Bulgarians, had carried him out of the common road; and in that interim, Tiberius had pursued the nighest way to the old castle allotted for Belisarius's confinement. The noise of a coach, in the court-yard of the castle, brought a sudden surprize of joy to Antonina and her daughter, Eudoxa. Eudoxa ran forth in the strongest emotions of joy, but to her disappointment instead of her father, meeting only a young nobleman, she turned short to her mother, exclaiming, *oh! it is not he!*

ANSELMO, an old faithful servant, at that instant came into the court-yard, pray, said Tiberius, is not this the place to which Belisarius has retreated? His lady and daughter have expected him here for some time, but their hopes have been disappointed. I would

willingly suffer for him, continued the faithful servant, would they only set him at liberty. Tiberius replied, he is at liberty, and on his journey here; you will see him presently; I expected he would have been here before me. Please walk in, Sir, and acquaint his family with the joyful news. Anselmo ran in quickly to his lady, madam, I have joyful news for you; my master lives; he is free, and will be here presently; a generous young gentleman brings the news: he expected to have found him here. At these words, Antonina cried out, where is the generous stranger, who so kindly interests himself in our favour? Pray, bring him in; let us see the blessed messenger.

You call us to life again, said Antonina to Tiberius; has the innocency of my dear husband appeared, and his enemies confounded at last? Tiberius was heartily sorry, that he had only a small share of joy to offer them, and softly said, Belisarius is alive; I have both seen and conversed with him; and expecting he would have been here before now, I came to offer him all the service in my power.

EUDOKA, looking Tiberius full in the face, observed the youth struggle with great inward emotions of grief, notwithstanding all the pains he took to stifle it, said, does the poor condi-

tion you observe us in make you dull? Only give me back my father; let him return, and bring health to my disconsolate mother, and we will shew the world, that riches always are not sufficient to make any person happy. The heart of Tiberius, being soon melted, by the behaviour of a virtuous and affectionate daughter, whose becoming fortitude and pious resignation had rendered her superior to all troubles, replied, I am not come here to insult you in your troubles; Belisarius and his family will always be illustrious, whatever is his misfortunes. I am surprized, Sir, said Antonina, to hear you talk of misfortunes, if he is restored to his liberty, they must be convinced of his innocence; and have no doubt restored him to all his former honours.

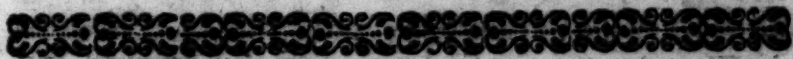
TIBERIUS replied, madam, it would be cruel to keep you in suspense; the freedom he has obtained, is intirely owing to his former popularity; the fears of a rebellion has obliged the court to yield to the demands of the people, who insisted he should be set at liberty; but they have made him as miserable as it was in their power.

THAT signifies nothing, said the amiable Eudoxa, if they do but allow us a little land to cultivate and improve, you shall see us as happy as any of the rural swains, who live in



this country.—And is the lovely daughter of Belisarius brought to this humble state!—exclaimed Tiberius. This humble state! replied Eudoxa; the heroes of Rome were contented with this state, when Rome was virtuous and free. Belisarius will not be ashamed to be another Regulus; my mother and I in our retreat have learned frugality and industry; my glorious father will be proud to wear a coat spun by the hands of his own daughter.

TIBERIUS stood before her, admiring her beauty, worth and dutiful affection; alas! said he to himself, what a sad disappointment will she soon meet with!



CHAP. VI.

**B**ELISARIUS now entering the castle, honest Anselmo met him in the courtyard, with eagerness pressing forward to meet him, and perceiving him blind, broke out into the most grievous lamentations, with sobs and tears. This made Belisarius recollect it was his old faithful servant Anselmo. He fell down at his feet, till Belisarius raised him, and told

him to be resigned, and desired him to lead the way to his wife and daughter.

AT the first sight, his daughter gave a great scream, and swooned away. Her mother, being ill of a slow nervous fever, immediately grew frantic, started from her bed, and all the strength of Tiberius and the woman, who held her, were not sufficient to hinder her from making an effort, to dash her head against the floor. The shrieks of the tender mother, awakened Endoxa from her swoon; she flew to her mother, catching her in her arms, and begged her to forbear out of compassion to her daughter. Oh, let me die, said the frantic mother; if I live, I shall endeavour to avenge his wrongs, by tearing out the hearts of his enemies, who have so barbarously used him! He certainly deserved better usage. Has he not for numbers of years been the pillar of the state? their deliverer from their enemies? the avenger of their wrongs, and yet fallen a sacrifice to their detestable blood hounds, who in their infernal council inflicted this punishment on him. Just heaven! look down in compassion, and avenge his wrongs!

IN her distraction, she tore the hair from her head, and with her nails, defaced her features, and then with open arms, she clasped her lord to her heart, pouring forth a torrent of tears.

Then turning to her daughter, it is better, said she, to escape from this bad world, where vice is rewarded, and virtue trampled under-foot.

AFTER this storm of passion was over, a mortal lowness and depression succeeded, which in a few hours put a period to her life.

WHAT a scene of horror was here before the eyes of Tiberius! the blind old hero, his wife lying dead, his daughter in the last extremity of distress! What a contrast to their former life, which had been passed in the utmost splendor and magnificence. Here Tiberius had an opportunity of seeing a great man struggling with adversity, and coming off victorious at the last, approved and admired by heaven and all good men.

BELISARIUS had all this time been silent, and gave a free vent to his own sorrow, and that of his daughter; he at last resumed his strength, with a noble fortitude of soul.

EUDOKA endeavoured to stifle her grief, that she might not add affliction to her aged father. The good old general embracing her, said, my dear child, you afflict yourself too much for these troubles, which instead of depressing us, should raise our souls above all the miseries and hardships of this world. Yours



mother has paid the debt of nature; and, I hope, now is in eternal peace. Her angel spirit is now pitying us here left behind her. The cold corpse there lying before your eyes, devoid of motion, is an emblem of the peace and quiet her soul enjoys. You see how transient and fluctuating life and all its enjoyments are; the world and all its splendor have now faded away from the eyes of your mother, who is now in the bosom of her father and her God. You observe these are reflexions founded on wisdom; the virtuous man, when all other hopes fail him, will always find consolation and happiness in the unbounded power and mercy of his God. Eudoxa replied, oh, instruct me in that wisdom; my feeble sex requires all the advice and assistance your wisdom can give me under so sore an affliction; my tender mother, whom my heart loved, dying in my arms, and to look upon you, the most worthy and best of parents and friends, in the sad condition your enemies have reduced you, is enough to break the most adamant heart. Belisarius replied, old age, or a fever might have deprived me of my eyes, and death in a short time will close them, so that my enemies have done no more, than what was to have been; and, as for the affluence of riches, you must learn how to put the small value upon them that they

deserve. Oh, blessed be God! replied Eudoxa, the want of riches gives me no pain nor anxiety. The tender hearted father wiped away the tears from her eyes, saying, let nothing then distress or trouble your spirits.

BELISARIUS being informed that an illustrious stranger desired to be admitted, he consented, asking him his business. Tiberius answered, I only came to take a share in your afflictions, and to assure you of doing all in my power to assuage them, when you shall please to lay your commands upon me.

THE time now drew near for solemnising the funeral. Belisarius, leaning on his daughter, attended the remains of his beloved wife to the gloomy tomb. His grief was that which became the character of a true christian philosopher, deep and silent; his face spread with a steady resigned patience to the hand of Providence. Tiberius assisted at the funeral rites, and was struck with the becoming manner in which Eudoxa performed the last duties to her fond and affectionate mother.

BELISARIUS addressed himself to the illustrious stranger, understanding it was he that had given him directions on the road, and desired to know his name. Tiberius replied, I was one of the hunting party to whom you applied for shelter, and whose youthful indiscre-

tion you so severely checked. I formerly served in the wars under Narses in Italy, and since in the wars of Colchis. Near this place I have a rural retreat, and it would be the height of my ambition to make it as agreeable to you as possible, in order to soften the calamities and troubles of that great and good general Belisarius. And as an argument, that, I hope, will have some weight, as I love my country, I feel her disgrace in your misfortunes, and would be admitted into your company to drink of that wisdom and virtue with which you are so abundantly filled, that I may learn, when my country calls me, to shew by my conduct how much I have improved under your wise counsels.

You pay a compliment to my old age, replied Belisarius; but, however, the interest you seem to take in my misfortunes bespeaks a well turned spirit, and an elegance of mind. At present you must excuse me; retirement and self-converse are what I must now have recourse to: the agitation of my spirits must be composed by silent meditation. Hereafter I shall so far accept your proposal, as to wish to live in good neighbourhood with you, and to maintain a friendly intercourse. I have a regard for youth; in that happy season of life, the soul, as yet unhackneyed in the ways of men, is susceptible of every fine impression; the sublime



and the beautiful of virtue inflame it with a laudable enthusiasm; and worldly passions have not yet entangled it in their snares. Your visits will ever be acceptable; call upon me often; I shall be glad to converse with you.

IF I am worthy of that honourable commerce, replied Tiberius, why may I not possess you wholly? My ancestors will applaud the use I make of the patrimony they transmitted to me, when it is rendered sacred by the retreat of Belisarius. Honour, respect, and reverence, will then be yours, and my whole household train will learn to emulate my example in treating you with every mark of veneration.

I READ, young man, the characters of virtue in all your words, returned Belisarius; but let us do nothing rashly. Give me to understand, for it is now ten years since I have been sequestered from the world, what is your father's station? and what are his designs in regard to your future settlement in life? We are descended, replied Tiberius, from one of those families which Constantine transplanted from Rome, and honoured with his highest favours. In the reign of the emperor Justin my father acquired no small share of military glory. He was esteemed and cherished by his sovereign. In the succeeding reign undue preferences were given to others; at least he thought so, and he

retired in discontent. Of that discontent he has since repented, and now for his son he forms schemes of ambition, which he neglected for himself.—You have opened enough to me, said Belisarius, and I will not be an obstacle to your advancement. You have convinced me that the dispositions of your heart are good: the pleasure arising from a generous way of thinking seems at once to be your motive, and your recompence: and indeed that pleasure is the sweetest the mind can feel. But I foresee a danger of which you are not aware: by visiting me, you will involve yourself in the ruin of a man proscribed. For let me tell you, my worthy young friend, that a court, whether right or wrong in its measures, never properly reviews its own deeds; it never reforms its conduct. Does it punish a real criminal? He will soon be forgotten. But has it injured the man of blameless integrity? He will be persecuted with unrelenting hatred; for the very mention of his name is a satire on the times, and his existence is to the conscience of his enemies an unceasing remembrancer of guilt.

I TAKE upon me all the risk, says Tiberius; I will be responsible for my conduct. The emperor may have erred, but he is ever open to conviction.

If you mean that he will be open to conviction.

sion in regard to me, says Belisarius, you must not lose a thought that way. The measure of my woes is full; the mischief is done; and may the emperor, for the peace of his future days, forget it all.

SINCE you have gone so far, replied Tiberius, let me insist upon a farther act of generosity to crown the whole. Preserve Justinian from the eternal reproach of letting you languish away the remainder of your days in misery. The humiliating condition in which I find you is shocking to humanity, a dishonour to the crown, the horror of every honest mind, and the utter discouragement of all virtue like your own.

THE virtue that I possess, replied Belisarius, is not to be discouraged by misfortunes: and to deal frankly with you, I think the wretched condition I am in may awaken both pity, indignation, and a spirit of revenge. A poor blind old man can give no umbrage, and yet may excite compassion. This determines me to live in obscurity. When I made myself known to your friends, the intemperance of the company you was in forced my honest zeal beyond the bounds of patience; and I am determined to be guilty of no more indiscretions of that kind. I am now quite dead to the world in this asylum. As the emperor may be ignorant of the



Bulgarians having entered Thrace, do not fail to inform him of it.

TIBERIUS was disappointed at this unexpected event of his visit. He took care to report the whole that passed minutely to Justinian. A body of troops were immediately dispatched against the Bulgarians, who were soon defeated. The emperor, after this, determined to pay a visit to the good old general. We will go together, said he to Tiberius, I will personate your father, and do you remember to be on your guard, that he may not be undeceived. Justinian had a small country-seat about half way to Belisarius' castle; he pretended to his court that here he designed to pass a few days in private. The next day he proceeded on his journey to visit the old illustrious general.



## C H A P. VII.

PASSING under the mouldering remains of an old portico, he thus exclaimed; Is this the melancholy residence of the hero, who so often brought me victory and joy! Belisarius, as soon as he heard them enter, rose to receive them. Remorse and shame filled the emperor, upon seeing the condition he had redu-

ced him to. A deep sigh proceeded from him, and he was so agitated with grief, that he would have sunk, had he not leaned on Tiberius. He covered his eyes with his hands, as being unworthy to see the light he had deprived his old general of. What means these deep sighs? cried Belisarius. My father is come to see you, replied Tiberius, and he is mightily affected by your misfortunes. O let me embrace him! cried the general; he has a virtuous son. Justinian immediately complied with his request, and no sooner the hero pressed him to his bosom, than his grief redoubled upon him, and he found himself unable to suppress his groans and tears. Restrain this violence of pity, said Belisarius; perhaps I am not altogether so wretched as you imagine. Let us discourse a little about what concerns yourself, and this young man, who will be a comfort to you in your old age. Yes, replied the emperor, in short and interrupted accents, yes—if you will condescend—to let him attend your lectures upon human life.—Alas! what can I offer, said Belisarius, that a wise and good father has not already anticipated?—You may instruct him, said the emperor, in what I perhaps know little of, the ways of courts, where he must pass his days. For a long time I have had so little commerce with men, that the world is as new to me as it is to him. But you, who

have seen things in all their various aspects, may render him inestimable service; and therefore I entreat you to unbosom yourself to him.—If he wants to give stability to fortune, said Belisarius, I am unfit to read a lesson on that head, as you perceive. Would he learn to be an honest man, at the hazard of all that is dear to him, there I can be of some use. He is born with bright advantages, and that is a primary requisite.—Very true, said Justinian, he is descended from a race of noble ancestors.—That was not my meaning; but however, that is an advantage, if not perverted to a wrong use. Have you ever, young man, continued Belisarius, reflected upon the true idea of nobility? It is a letter of credit given you by your country upon the security of your ancestors, in the confidence, that, at a proper period of life, you will acquit yourself with honour to those who stand engaged for you.—But that credit, says the emperor, is often rashly given.—No matter, resumed Belisarius; it is notwithstanding an institution of useful policy. I imagine to myself, when a child of noble descent comes into the world, naked, weak, indigent, and helpless, like the offspring of a common peasant, I then imagine to myself his country greeting him in this manner: “Welcome, my child! Welcome to my arms! you will hereafter be devoted to



“ my service, intrepid, gallant, generous, and  
 “ heroic as your famed forefathers. They have  
 “ transmitted to you their own brilliant exam-  
 “ ple; I confer upon you their titles and their  
 “ honours, strong reasons both to rouse you to  
 “ an emulation of their virtues.” This is the  
 solemn scene I figure to myself: can you sug-  
 gest any thing to your fancy more awful and  
 sublime?—But this is rather carrying it too far,  
 said Justinian.—Not a jot, replied Belisarius; in  
 the education of young minds we must propose  
 nobly to them. Let me add, there is frugali-  
 ty in dealing out pomp and honours with a li-  
 beral hand. For suppose, upon a fair estimate,  
 that these incentives produce only two or three  
 great men in a century: and what then? The  
 state has nothing to complain of; nay it has am-  
 ple compensation. You, young man, must be  
 one of those who are to make this compensation  
 to your country. Here addressing himself to  
 the emperor, You have allowed me, says he, to  
 speak in the stile of a father to him?—Do it, I  
 conjure you; replied Justinian.—Well then, my  
 son, you must begin with a persuasion that no-  
 bility is a flame, which blazes intensely as long  
 as it can communicate itself, but dies away as  
 soon as it wants the proper materials to keep it  
 alive and to support it. Be mindful, therefore,  
 young man, of your birth, for it imposes duties

on you; be mindful of your ancestors, for the example they have left you calls for your utmost ardor: remember, that the glory from them devolved upon you, is not an inheritance, upon which you are lazily to subsist; and above all things, eradicate from your heart that supercilious pride, which looks big with the consciousness of a family name, and beholds with the timorous eye of scorn and jealousy every preference obtained by honest merit. Ambition has in its nature a spurious sort of nobility; and therefore, by a kind of congenial influence, readily insinuates itself into the minds of persons well descended; but this passion, when carried to excess, is tinged with meanness, like any other motive of the heart. It swells with its own importance, because it affects an air superior to all the duties of an honest man. Would you mark its operations, and know its character distinctly? Observe the bird of prey, how it hovers over the field in a morning, and amidst a thousand animals marks out its destined prey: even in the same manner ambition wakens to its early schemes, and plans the future destruction of some splendid virtue. Alas! my friend, an attachment to self, which is indeed a natural propensity of the heart, becomes enormous in a public character, whenever it fixes into a ruling passion. I have known men in my time, who

would not hesitate to risk the safety of a whole army, or the well being of the state, in order to gratify the selfish views of inordinate ambition. Stung with envy at the success of others whom they have not merit to emulate, they are for ever alarmed with the apprehension of losing the honour of some brilliant action: and were they not restrained by fear, they would make every enterprize miscarry, in which they have not the command: even the public good is a calamity to them, unless ascribed to their own abilities. This set of men, whether in the cabinet or the field, is the most pernicious race. The man of true honour feels within himself the best intimations of his duty, and he looks for no external motive. His God and his conscience are the witnesses of his actions, and to them only he makes his appeal. A generous openness of heart, a calm deliberate courage, and a prompt zeal for the public service, are at once the constituents of true greatness, and the best evidences of it. Pride, vanity, and envy, are the marks of a little and a narrow spirit. It is not enough that you make no pretension to the praise which you have not merited: you must even possess the noble self-denial, that can renounce the fame you have fairly earned. It must ever be remembered, that the sovereign is liable to error, for he is no more than man: and the mind ought:



to be forearmed with the consideration, that your country, and the age you live in, may form wrong judgments of you, nay that those judgments may not be reversed by the equity of after-times. In that case, you must consult your own heart, and in the manly self-conference enquire, "Were I reduced to the low condition of Belisarius, would my innocence support me? Would the consciousness of having discharged my duty make even affliction smile?" If you feel within yourself any indecision respecting this matter, live your days in obscurity: you have not the materials of a public character.

ALAS! said Justinian, with a deep sigh, what you exact is above the powers of man; and you are yourself a terrible example.—My example may at first appear terrible, replied Belisarius; but upon a closer view, that impression will wear away. Let us suppose, for instance, that the chance of war, a fit of illness, or a decay of nature, had deprived me of my sight; it would then have been among the common accidents of life, with nothing remarkable or pathetic annexed to it. And are not the vices of human nature among the incidents of life? Are they not in the ordinary course of things, as much as the plague that laid waste the empire? Does it

signify by what instrument we fall? The wrath of a sovereign, the arrow of an enemy, or a grain of sand? They can all dispatch us, and no matter which \*. When we enter upon the stage of life, we must be prepared for the changes of the scene. You, Sir, who have sent forth your son to a course of military toil in the service of his country; have you no presentiment, no forecast to suggest to you the variety of perils he has to cope with? Add to that account, the machinations of envy, the snares of treachery, the malice of dissimulation, and the clandestine stabs of calumny; and if your son lives to my age without being ruined by them, you will allow, that he had peculiar good fortune. Every thing in this life has its counter-balance. You see me now superannuated, blind, and indigent: the tenant of an old castle in ruins: but look back to a space of thirty years, adorned with happiness, and bright with victory and triumphs: review that period, and you will wish your son the lot of Belisarius. Come, my worthy neighbour, we must summon up a little resolution: you feel the solicitude of a father; but your

\* Lice destroyed Democritus, and another kind of lice destroyed Socrates. Two legged animals, to what end this? You entered into life, you set sail, you was carried away, depart. M. Antoninus. lib III.

son, I still flatter myself, does me the honour to envy me, even now.—Most assuredly I do, exclaimed Tiberius.—But he feels a virtuous envy, said the emperor, interrupting him; and the object of it is not the series of your victories, but that unshaken courage which stands at bay with fortune to the last.—Courage is indispensable, replied Belisarius; but not merely that courage which can look death in the face: that is the bravery of every common soldier. The courage of a general is an elevation of mind superior to all human contingencies. Who, think you, in my estimation, is the man of true courage? He who, at the utmost hazard, nay at the expence of his glory, continues obstinate in the discharge of his duty. Such was Fabius, that Roman worthy, wise, temperate, and firm; who could bear the censures of mankind for his delay, yet hold the even tenor of his conduct free from the irresolution of the vain, inconsistent Pompey, who chose to hazard the fate of Rome and the universe, rather than groan under the intolerable pleasantry of a joke. I will just mention a passage in my own life. In one of my first campaigns against the Persians, the rash advice of certain turbulent spirits in my camp prevailed upon me to give battle, much against my own inclination. I lost the



day. For that misconduct I shall ever stand self-condemned. Whoever lets the caprice of opinion be the rule of his actions, will waver in uncertainty, without precision or dependence on himself. Let me ask, What would be the consequence, if, before we decide with ourselves to be just and upright, we should resolve to wait for a dispassionate age of the world, and an infallible prince? We must end therefore in this conclusion; keep right onward with firmness and intrepidity. Perhaps, when you reach the goal, ingratitude and calumny will be there untired; but glory will also be there; and if not, virtue may dispense with it: she will never fail you. Even in the vilest state of misery and oppression, she will be a faithful follower; and, oh! my good friend, if you but knew how much a single smile of virtue outweighs all the fickle caresses of fortune! —

YOUR every word penetrates my soul, said Justinian, in a tender tone of voice, and much embarrassed. How inestimably happy is my son to imbibe these sentiments at this period of life! It is in this school that sovereigns ought to study! — Let us say nothing of sovereigns, replied Belisarius; they are more to be pitied than we are. — Yes, said Justinian, situated as they are, with not a friend, at

least without any of ability and courage enough to guide their steps, their case is lamentable indeed. My son is destined by his birth to live in courts: it may one day be his lot, in the councils of his prince, or perhaps in a more intimate connexion, to avail himself of these your lectures for the benefit of mankind. Do not disdain to open and enlarge his understanding; proceed to fill his young conceptions with sublime ideas of the true art of governing; instruct him, as you think the friend of a sovereign ought to be. Justinian is now near his grave; but his more happy successor may have the pupil of Belisarius for his friend. — Alas! said the hero, would it were in my power once more, before I die, to be of service to my country! But the observations my experience has made will be thought the reveries of a visionary old man. In visionary systems, difficulties often happen but soon disappear. The philosopher imagines himself free from the influence of every passion, and never subject to any frailty, always wise and enlightened far beyond any other person: and, having the reins of government always in his own hands, soon extricates himself out of all his embarrassments. — Tiberius replied, even those chimerical ideas may have their uses, and may one time or other be adopted as the

model of a good, though an imperfect institution.—I wish it may, replied Belisarius, tho' I am not so vain as ever to expect it will; for I am sensible the very worst forms of government have their admirers. Good, Justinian replied: I am certain your speculations will not be thrown away, if you will condescend to communicate them to my son.—I will chearfully do my utmost, replied the hero; I observe by your conversation, that you are deserving, and therefore I shall be open and free with you. But I must insist as a preliminary article, that our conversations may be kept a profound secret during the present reign.—And why that precaution? replied Justinian.—Because I am not willing to sow thorns under the pillow of an aged emperor, nor start such difficulties as he has not the power to overcome, nor throw any cloud over the remaining part of his life. It being now late, their first conversation ended here.

ON his way home, he reflected on himself, that he had not known what sort of a man Belisarius was sooner. It is thus, my dear Tiberius, we are kept in the dark, and frequently made to behave contrary to our own, but approved maxims.

JUSTINIAN'S repose was interrupted this night; the striking things he had heard, con-



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tinually sounded in his ears, and Belisarius was always uppermost in his thoughts; so that next day he returned to have a second meeting with his old illustrious general.



C H A P. VII.

**B**ELISARIUS, accompanied by his little guide, had taken his morning walk, and upon the road met with Justinian, who immediately alighted, and with the greatest familiarity, began a second conversation. We have, said he, been just now conversing upon the astonishing injustice of your sentence, which was extorted by wicked men from the aged emperor. My son and I have been discoursing upon the deplorable state of kings, and the dangers that surround them. Is it not most surprizingly wonderful, that whole nations, who are by nature free, should give up their rights into the hands of one man, governed by the same passions as themselves, as liable to judge wrong, and be imposed upon as the meanest of his subjects, who in a moment may act in such a manner, as may destroy millions!—Belisarius replied, do you imagine that there is more safety, greater wisdom, and a juster administration, in a senate, or an assembly of

the people? Was it under a monarchy that Camillus, Themistocles and Aristides, were proscribed? It frequently happens, that when you multiply the members of government, you may also multiply its vices, every member being liable to mingle his own vices. The more simple the form of government is, it is the more desirable; and it seems most eligible for mankind to transfer their natural rights upon those most renowned for wisdom and valour, whether these states were founded on conquest or original compact. It does not surprize me, that such should gain the popular regard, and that the greatest hero should be made magistrate, and invested with the government of the whole; I am rather astonished that any person of such a character should be found willing to accept of so painful an employment.—I must own, said Tiberius, I do not understand this part of the argument.—Represent to yourself, said Belisarius, the first formation of a state, and the difference between the governors and governed, placing yourself alternately in the different characters, and this will give you a distinct idea.

THE people may reply, we have no risk to run in giving supremacy to a king, so long as we make his only happiness to consist in studying the good of the whole; we make them

but one thing; the force of the community becomes the strength of the crown; upon the general weal his glory is grafted; and the regal character is at once derived from the people and supported by them. The general love of his subjects will be his true self-love, and his best interest will be found in justice, moderation, and beneficence. This must have been the political creed of mankind.—But they did not take into their account, said Justinian, the passions and the complication of motives that encompass a prince.—Very true, replied Belisarius; they only thought of an inseparable union of interests between the sovereign and his people: that there ever could be a separation of those interests, and that the two parts of the body-politic should live in a state of mutual hostility, did not enter into their idea. Usurpation appeared to them a kind of suicide, that could only proceed from a total privation of reason: and should the prince be seized with so extravagant a phrenzy, they relied upon the wisdom of the legislature to controul the passions of a man grown an enemy to himself. They foresaw indeed that many might find their interest in mischief and evil deeds; but they persuaded themselves that such a confederacy in vice would be a small minority, against which a great superi-



ority of good and honest men, with the prince at their head, would always preponderate. And indeed, till fatal experience opened the eyes of men, who could foresee that kings would ever sink to such a degree of infatuation, as to divorce themselves from their people, and combine with the avowed enemies of all the rights of man? A conduct like this is such an outrage to nature and to reason, that it was necessary it should actually happen, before the possibility of it could be believed. It was not in the simplicity of ancient manners to expect so shocking a revolution.

To consider, on the other hand, the feelings of sovereigns in that early period of mankind, he, on whom the supreme authority devolved, must be deemed the party that had most reason to be alarmed. For if the father of a family, who has a charge of five or six children to educate, and to establish in the world, feels an incessant anxiety that plants thorns upon his pillow, what must be the case with the chief of a family which is counted by millions?

He must have reasoned with himself in this manner: The compact which I make with my people, binds me to live for their good only: the repose of my life must be devoted to their

happiness. I engage myself by a solemn oath to regard the good of the community in every legislative act, and to submit my own will to the spirit of the laws. In proportion to the power committed to me, my natural liberty is abridged. The more my subjects confide in me, the stronger are the obligations I am under. For the frailties of my nature, my errors, and my passions, I render myself accountable; I give my people a kind of jurisdiction over me; and, in short, by consenting to reign, I abdicate myself. The private man is, as it were, annihilated, to make room for royalty to engross the soul. Can there be a more generous sacrifice? an engagement of so solemn a nature? And yet these were the sentiments of Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius. *I have nothing properly my own*, said one of them. *My very palace is not mine*, was the declaration of the other. The few of their stamp thought the same.

In the appendages of sovereignty vulgar error marks only some external circumstances of parade, which serve to awaken envy, such as palaces, the splendor of a court, the homage that is paid, together with the pomp and magnificence which policy attached to the regal state, in order to give it sanction and authority. And yet amidst all this bril-

liancy, the sovereign is no more than mere man, overwhelmed with splendid cares, distracted with anxieties, a self-consuming votarist for the public good, and a victim to his duty, if he be zealous to perform it, an object of scorn if he neglect it, and of detestation, should he betray it. Under perpetual restraint, and fluctuating for ever betwixt good and evil, he finds himself environed with enemies to his quiet, with painful vigils, devouring cares, a tedious apathy, that makes him weary of himself, and ends in a distaste to every thing. Behold there the portrait of a king! It is true, invention has exhausted itself to make his enjoyments counterbalance his cares; but his cares are numberless, and his pleasures are confined within the scanty circle of his wants. The highest luxury is not ingenious enough to give him one new organ of sensation; and while pleasures solicit him on every side, nature quite harrassed down forbids enjoyment, and the palled appetite refuses all. Thus every thing about him is superfluity: his extensive palace is but a void immense, of which he occupies a little corner; under crimson curtains and gilded ceilings he seeks in vain that sweet repose which dwells in the peasant's cottage; and at his table, the pleasure of the monarch ends, when appetite craves no more.



I PERCEIVE, said Tiberius, that every thing cannot be enjoyed, where every thing abounds; but is the pleasure of chusing nothing in the account.

ALAS! young man! exclaimed Belisarius, my worthy young man! you are not acquainted with that incurable disease satiety. It is the most fatal languor of the mind. Are you acquainted with the cause of it? The power of enjoying with facility makes us listless, and disgusted at every thing. Either our desires have not time to revive, or they revive only to loath the affluence that invites too soon. Art has wearied itself in studying delicacies to provoke and quicken the languid appetite; but the powers of perception are decayed, the inlets of pleasure are obstructed, the incentives to action are extinguished in the soul, and delight itself has lost both its allurements and its gratifications. Woe to the man who can command every thing with a wish! for as, on the one hand, the predominant idea of a total privation saps all the vigour of the mind, by fixing a train of corroding reflexions; so, on the other, a constant habit of enjoyment gives insipidity to what were otherwise exquisite, and thus life loses its relish.

You will grant me, however, interposed Tiberius, that there are refined and sensible

delights, in their nature proper for the gratification of a monarch, which are always sure to give rational enjoyment, without the danger of disgusting by repetition.—As for instance? says Belisarius.—The love of glory, for instance, replied the young man.—But what sort of glory?—Why of all the various classes of glory renown in arms must hold the foremost place.—Very well; that is your position: and do you think the pleasure that springs from conquest has a sincere and lasting charm in it? Alas! when millions are stretched in mangled heaps upon the field of battle, can the mind in that situation taste of joy? I can make allowance for those who have met danger in all its shapes; they may be permitted to congratulate themselves, that they have escaped with their lives; but in the case of a king born with sensibility of heart, the day that spills a deluge of human blood, and bids the tears of natural affection flow in rivers round the land, that cannot be a day of true enjoyment. I have more than once traversed over a field of battle: I would have been glad to have seen a Nero in my place; the tears of humanity must have burst from him. I know there are princes who take the pleasure of a campaign, as they do that of hunting, and who send forth their people to the fray, as they let

slip their dogs: but the rage of conquest is like  
 the unrelenting temper of avarice, which tor-  
 ments itself, and is to the last insatiable. A  
 province has been invaded; it has been subdued;  
 it lies contiguous to another not yet attempted: \*  
 desire begins to kindle; invasion happens after  
 invasion; ambition irritates itself to new projects,  
 till at length comes a reverse of fortune, which  
 exceeds in the mortification it brings, all the  
 pride and joy of former victories. But to give  
 things every flattering appearance, let us suppose  
 a train of uninterrupted success: yet, even in  
 that case the conqueror pushes forward like  
 another Alexander, to the limits of the world,  
 and then, like him, remeasures back his course,  
 fatigued with triumphs, a burthen to himself  
 and to mankind, at a loss what to do with the  
 immense tracts which he has depopulated, and  
 melancholy with the reflexion that an acre  
 of his conquests would suffice to maintain him,  
 and a little pit-hole to hide his remains from  
 the world. In my youth I saw the sepul-  
 chre of Cyrus: a stone bore this inscription:  
*I am Cyrus, he who subdued the Persian em-*

\* Oh! might I have that angle yonder,  
 Which disproportions now my field,  
 What satisfaction it would yield?

HOR. Lib. 2. Sat. 6.



*pire. Friend, whoever thou art, or wherever thy native country, envy me not the scanty space that covers my clay-cold ashes* †. Alas! said I, turning aside from the mournful epitaph, is it worth while to be a conqueror!

TIBERIUS interrupted him with astonishment; can these be the sentiments of Belisarius?—Yes, young man, thus thinks Belisarius: he is able to decide upon this subject. Of all the plagues which the pride of man has engendered, the rage of conquest is the most destructive.—I must give up the point, says Tiberius, but still there is a prerogative of enjoyment, a gratification worthy of kings, and that is the supreme delight of serving mankind, a pleasure springing from the happiness of millions.—Ay! replied Belisarius, if a king could be sure of making a nation happy, his accession were an object of envy; ascending his throne he would rise to the great pre-eminence of dispensing public good, and guiding the reins of government for the welfare of mankind. This would be a sacred privilege! that a generous mind should sacrifice the repose of life to this great ambition, would not be matter of astonishment. But address yourself to the august old man who now reigns over you, and desire to be informed by him, whether to discharge the duties of his sta-

† See Plutarch's life of Alexander.

tion is an easy task?—That a prince has done his utmost, replied Justinian, to promote the welfare of his subjects, to make their burthen light, and to deserve the love of his people, a nation may sometimes be willing to believe.

THEY may believe it, said Belisarius, and some princes, even during their lives, have obtained that glorious suffrage. It has been the recompence of their upright government; their sweetest retribution. But without some singular event to give sincerity to public testimonials, unless some great and trying conjuncture happen, when the sentiments of the people may be supposed to burst forth in the honest effusion of their hearts, what prince can flatter himself that the addresses he receives are not suborned? How can he persuade himself that he hears the real sense of the nation? His courtiers vouch for it; but who is responsible for them? While the song of revelry echoes through the palace, how shall he be assured that in the remoter parts of his dominions, the dome of his vice-roy is not filled with the complaints of injured men, and the cottage of the labourer with the groans of misery? The public festivals are nothing but scenes acted before him, and the applause he meets is too often preconcerted. He sees the vilest of mortals canonized for deities; and though the vain tyrant, whose days are

spent in one continued round of voluptuousness, may imbibe the incense which adulation offers; yet the man of virtue, who made his reign a painful endeavour to do all the good that depended on him, closes an honourable life in anguish, and descends to the tomb of his ancestors without ever being sure that he had one sincere friend. When I reflect that Justinian is in this situation, and that he is likely to carry with him to his grave a persuasion that Belisarius was a traitor, and never loved him, I own myself sorely grieved: it is a stab to my very heart.

No! exclaimed the emperor with impetuosity, (and then recollecting himself suddenly) No, said he, in a more deliberate accent, a prince is not always unhappy to such a degree, as nor to know that in the course of his reign he has been truly loved.

BE it so, replied Belisarius; he knows that he is loved; and yet even this sweet reflexion is dashed with bitterness. Certain it is, the good of his people must be dear to him in proportion as he thinks himself dear to them; and in consequence, whatever good he does, or whatever evil he wards off from them, the account appears to him, in the general mass of good and evil, so inadequate to his wishes, that at length in the evening of a long and stormy life, he seriously puts the question, *What good have I*



*done?* Struggling with adversities, and yet unable to subdue them, what must be his regret, when he sits down conscious of his feeble efforts, and sees himself a slave to the emergencies of the day, obliged to govern by expedients only? Marcus Aurelius is the prince upon record who best deserved to see the world happy under his administration \*, and yet what a reign was his? A scene of wild commotion, in which all the accumulated ills of life seemed to crowd themselves together †. One would have thought it an insurrection of all nature, a general conspiracy to baffle every effort of wisdom and of virtue. It is a melancholy task, that he who raised a temple to *Beneficence*, was doomed to see the blackest period of distress and misery. But not to go so far back for examples, was ever a reign more distinguished for activity, for vigour, and apparent success, than this of Justinian? A series of war and victory in three quarters of the world for thirty years together; the losses of a century repaired in one reign; the people of the North and of the West exter-

\* He was a man of divine disposition, and possessed of all virtues, and opposed himself against public misfortunes, as the protector of the people. Aurel. Vict.

† Hardly any calamity could be thought or spoken of, the most grievous and afflicting to mankind, that did not rage in his reign. Aurel. Vict.

minated beyond the Danube and the Alps; tranquility established through all the provinces of Asia; kings overthrown, and led in triumph; the desolation of a plague, the waste of invasions, and the ruin of earthquakes effaced almost from the memory of man by the restoring hand of unwearied virtue; places of defence and temples without number, the former built from the ground, and the latter decorated with every splendid ornament! These were the works of Justinian's reign; imperial works! how glorious! how magnificent! And yet what a falling off! Behold him now in the decline of old age; what has he done? That victorious arm was never able to fix the empire upon a durable foundation; at this very instant it totters to its ruin; that is at last the close of all his labours, the fruit of so many triumphs. Let this, Tiberius, be a lesson to you; let it instruct you to view with pity the splendid misery of kings, to rejudge their actions with lenity, and in particular to conceive no dissatisfaction to a venerable sovereign on account of the ills which he has let fall, or the good which he has omitted to do.

You alarm me, said Tiberius, with these reflexions; my first advice to any friend of mine upon a throne shall be to abdicate it.—To abdicate it! replied Belisarius; that you will not

do; courage will never be the adviser of desertion. Were you ever induced by peril and fatigue to abandon the sword? There is no difference in this view of things, between a sword and a scepter. It is incumbent upon every man to crowd into his life all the duties he can. Endeavour not to conceal from your friend, that he must inevitably be a victim to those about him; but make him sensible at the same time, that there is a pleasure as well as a pain in being thus sacrificed; and that, in order to insure his true recompence, he must inflame his imagination with the enthusiasm of public virtue, and must thence deduce the sweet reward of all his generous labours \*. —And where is this reward to be met with, interposed Tiberius?—It consists, returned Belisarius, in our own inward consciousness; it is purely sentimental, and springs out of the reflexion that we find within our breasts, the active principles of humanity, social affection, generous sympathy, those amiable qualities which constitute the dignity of our nature, and merit the approbation of earth and Heaven. Can you imagine that a king has such contracted views, as to rise in a morning

\* Let not the man who hath done good seek applause, but betake himself to another employment, like as the vine, that it may again produce the grape at its proper season. Mar. Antonin. lib. iii.



to balance the account of what he may merit in the course of the day? His language to himself, I take it, must be, Awake! arise! and with you let justice and benevolence open their eyes on the world. Divest yourself of little selfish passions, of your schemes of private gratification, and resign even the repose of your life. You do not live for yourself alone; the soul of a whole people stirs within you; your will is the will of millions, and properly promulgated receives the sanction of a law. Let the law then be the rule of your government, and remember that on the happiness of numbers your own interest is grafted †. You are moved, Tiberius! your hand trembles in mine! let me bid you rest assured, that the very tears of virtue have inexpressible delight. Virtue, it is true, cannot ascertain a constant good, unmixed with evil; but is there such a thing in human life? And if there is, for whom is it reserved? For the inactive, the wicked, and unworthy? The mischief which a patriot prince cannot remove,

† In the morning when you rise full of care from sleep, be ready to think with yourself that you are rising to perform the office of a man.—Are you not sensible of this, that you can execute many things which admit not of this excuse, that your natural disposition renders you unfit to do them? And yet do you still knowingly continue fixed upon the ground. *Mat. Antonin. lib. v.*

draws tears from his humanity, but they are not the bitter tears of envy, remorse, and turpitude. They are the pleasing sorrows of a Titus, who weeps that he has lost a day: They are pure as the source from which they spring. You may therefore aver to your friend, and pray aver it with energy, as if some God were breathing through you, that armed with virtue he will never know the pang of envying the fortunes of the vile and wicked. But this constancy of mind, this true support of virtue, is not the spontaneous growth of the human breast; the spirit of a young prince must be attempered to it; and how he is to be initiated, we will make the subject of to-morrow's interview.

HE moulds me to his will, said Tiberius to Justinian; his power over my soul is irresistible; he sinks, inflames, and elevates at his own discretion.—He tears my very heart, replied the emperor; then fetched a deep sigh, and remained a considerable time in pensive silence. To dispel the gloom his court tried all its gaieties, but every endeavour was fruitless importunity. On the morrow, having signified his inclination to take a solitary walk, he struck into a neighbouring wood; Tiberius was there in waiting, and together they went to their appointment. The young man did not fail to re-

give the topic which had been promised, and Belisarius proceeded in the following manner.



## C H A P. IX.

**I**T has been a question among philosophers, if there was a possibility of loving virtue for its own excellence? Such a principle is the privilege of only a few. If it was to proceed from reflexion, it would be loving it for interest sake. Virtue, like friendship, frequently refines itself from every thing of a drossy nature: the workings of one will illustrate the other.

FRIENDSHIP owes its origin to views of conveniency and pleasure. The effect very often in its proceedings is detached from the cause; the inducement subsides, and the sentiment that produced it has full power over the heart, and insinuates itself by a secret charm; and when it becomes habitual, mingles with our love of existence. Uneasy sensations may sometimes take place in the mind, instead of promised joys; but if the heart has been delighted with the sweets of friendship, rather than renounce it, it will forego all the alluring comforts it promised itself the enjoyment of. Friendship com-



mences in prosperous circumstances, and rather increases when the object falls into misfortunes. The same may be affirmed of virtue\*. To engage our affections, it must first attract by an appearance of the agreeable or the useful: for before we are enamoured of her, we love ourselves: and till we know the real sweets of virtue, we look for gratifications very different from what she affords. When Regulus, in the spring of life, beheld her for the first time, she struck him with the pomp of triumph and the splendor of glory. Whether he abandoned her afterwards, when she had nothing to give but fetters, the torture, and the funeral pile, need not now be mentioned.

You must therefore begin by sounding the temper of the prince, and discovering the objects that chiefly strike his fancy. To be free, powerful, rich, obeyed by his subjects, esteemed through life, and happy in the prospect of future fame, will perhaps be the prevailing desires. Inform him therefore, that from virtue alone he can obtain what he pants for, and you will not mislead him.

THERE is a secret in the art of governing,

\* If you can find any thing in human life better than justice, truth, temperance, fortitude, I advise you to run to its embrace with all the powers of your soul.

M. Antonin. lib. iii.

too often concealed from the pride of kings, in which every well-disposed prince ought to be early instructed, and that is contained in this sober truth: there is no absolute power except that of the laws, and he who aims at despotism enslaves himself. For what is law but the will of the whole community †, expressed by one man, in the same manner as his power is the whole force of the state collected in himself? But when the will of one is erected in opposition to the whole, the force of the body-politic will then be set against the prince, who resorts to the practice of dividing, weakening, and subverting the strength of the kingdom; or, perhaps, at length he is in open arms against it. Instead of being the father of his people, he is now their tyrant: he governs by intrigue, and strives by little arts of policy to delude, surprise, alarm, and terrify his subjects into a tame submission; or else he resorts to his agents of destruction, who sell the blood of their countrymen, and march sword in hand through the realm, covering all with desolation, till murder has taken off every honest man who dared to resist the yoke and vindicate the rights of nature. Hence the rage of civil commotions, in which a brother says to his brother, Die, or yield to the tyrant, who has paid me for cut-

† Pand. lib. i. tit. 3.

ting your throat. Proud of an usurpation maintained by force of arms, or founded on superstition, the tyrant congratulates himself; but let his heart tremble within him, if he ever cease to pamper the pride, or controul the licentiousness of his detested party. While they serve him, they chain him to themselves by his fears; and for the obedience they pay their captive king, they demand in return impunity for their crimes. Being thus grown the oppressor of one part of his subjects, he is a slave to the other; as mean and abject to the bad, as fierce and domineering to the good. Constrained to manage with his accomplices, he is obliged to study how to gratify them, that the passions which list on his side may not revolt from him; for he knows their fierce and dangerous quality, since they have already marked their way with ruin, and broke asunder all the ties of nature and humanity. The tyger, trained to the chase, and educated by man to the skill of devouring, will fly at his master, if share of the prey be withheld from him. The tyrant's compact with his factors of mischief is precisely the same.

THE supreme power, therefore, as it approaches to tyranny, becomes feeble in proportion, and depends for support upon the men who have leagued themselves against the constitution. It must be ever attentive to the tools of a par-



ty, lest they should make a defection to the interests of their country. Every mark of compliance, respect, and the most servile toleration, must be paid to them, to the utter subversion of justice, and the neglect of all sound policy. The prince must descend to the meanest deferences, the most flagrant partiality, the humblest dissimulation, and even so low as to wear the smiles of content, with resentment at his heart.

THE prince that would govern according to the true spirit of civil policy, must make the laws the sole rule of his conduct! for his authority is inferior to the laws, founded upon the will and the whole force of the community. He will, in that case, know no enemies but the base and wicked, the common enemies of society. Whoever interests himself in the support of order and the public tranquility, is an assertor of the sovereign authority which protects him. Every citizen, in the declared foe of his prince, beholds his own personal enemy. Party-division is banished from the state, and the sovereign, in league with his people, is rendered rich and powerful by the wealth and power of his people. Under no necessity to intrigue with parties, he reigns in freedom, perhaps in justice, with his crown firm and unshaken on his head. His administration, fixed upon the basis of law and public security at home, becomes

respectable to foreign powers; and as he is never infligated by caprice and pride to wage a war of ambition, his armies, maintained and regulated under proper discipline, are ready to take the field with vigour and with spirit, when the public cause demands the exertion of the state against the author of civil discord, or the foreign usurper. Oh! my friend! let justice be the basis of the supreme authority, and the love of a grateful people will not fail to be its most invigorating principle, and its best support. The slave will fight but reluctantly for his prison and his chains; but the citizen, who is secure in his civil rights, who loves his prince, and is reciprocally beloved, will hazard himself in the defence of the authority to which he is indebted for his own protection. Amidst the hardships of the campaign, and the perils of battle, he feels himself inflamed with the idea that he is struggling for his fires and his altars, for all that can be dear to him.

Ah! these lessons, said Tiberius, sink deep into my heart: they are delivered with words that burn; they kindle a flame in the soul. When shall I be able to inspire the breast of kings with sentiments like these!

It is now clear, replied Belisarius, that the true splendor and authority of sovereigns are

founded on justice; that virtue and beneficence strengthen the foundation; and that the most absolute prince is he who reigns in the hearts of his people.—From what you have said, interposed Tiberius, it is now plain that true policy and reason are convertible terms; and that the art of governing consists in following the suggestions of wisdom and of virtue.—You are perfectly right, replied Belisarius; nothing can be more simple, more easy in the practice, and sure of its effect. The emperor Justin, originally an honest peasant of Illyria, who came to a throne from the plough, found the way to endear his administration to mankind. Was it owing to his skill in politics? Far from it; it was owing to the rectitude of his mind, and the amiable dispositions of his heart. Were it my lot to govern, I should endeavour to copy that great example. Far be from the breast of a prince that sly, slow policy, that looks with an oblique eye upon every thing. It looks about indeed with a kind of indirect prudence, and recoils in time from rocks and precipices; but it is disquietude at best. How unlike the serenity enjoyed by him who loses all thoughts of self in the love of millions, and is therefore less exposed than the most wary, circumspect, and suspicious tyrant! But the misfortune is, the prince is



too often alarmed by artful and designing men: he is taught to consider his people as an enemy to be dreaded; and that dread, as soon as impressed, lends reality to the ideal danger; for it gives birth to mistrust, and mistrust is the mother of hatred and of malice.

You have observed that a prince, a man almost solitary and without connexions, has his cares and wants, contracted into very scanty limits; that at this ease he commands all the real good in life; that he is narrowly circumscribed; and all beyond a small circle is vanity, illusion and deceit. While nature prescribes to him to be moderate in his desires, all things about him irritate his passions, and stimulate intemperance. Alas! were it his aim to live in harmony with his people, he would have no party but his subjects, no interest but that of the state. How differently are things circumstanced at present? All confidence is extinguished; the necessity of being ever guarded against a turbulent and seditious populace is inculcated; and a standing army is maintained to terrify those who should be cherished by their sovereign. By these means the prince lives at variance with his subjects; his party is formed, and ambition with a train of inordinate desires stalks at the head of it. This hydra of faction is ever insatiable, and

yet unconstitutional means must be tried to satisfy its rapacity. Here then is the first spring of that monstrous distinction, which we have known in the empire, between the provinces of the people and the provinces of the emperor, between the interests of the subject and those of the prince. The idea of property should never enter the thoughts of the sovereign. When once his imagination is struck with it, it follows that the security of his crown and his life seems to depend upon that property, and by a natural progress avarice takes possession of him. He thinks himself enriched by the impoverishment of his people; and whatever rapacity has seized, is set down as clear gain. In proportion as the subject is plundered, he appears to the jealous prince reduced to a deeper subjection. Hence schemes of rapine on the one hand, discontent and repining murmurs on the other; and hence the dark seeds of civil war, which, like a smothered flame, lie brooding in the very heart of the state, and at length break out in sudden eruptions all over the land. Of his private coffers the sovereign now thinks he has the full advantage; he congratulates himself on the prudence which settled his measures so long before-hand: but, short-sighted man! he little perceives that, by being just, he would

have been above such little precautions ; and that all the mean, and of course cruel, passions, which list for hire in his cause, would be vile and useless, if virtue were the spring of his actions. This, my friend Tiberius, this is the doctrine which the future sovereign ought to hear from you. Let him once be persuaded that the state and the sovereign are but one thing: let him understand that this political union constitutes his true strength, the basis of his dignity, his honour, and his peace; and ideas of property will then be rejected as fordid and unworthy\*. His solid advantage will be placed in the good he procures for his people: and thus his passions will transform themselves to the virtues of a patriot king, just and equitable for his own interest, moderate upon principles of ambition, and benevolent through very selfishness. It is by considering things in this way, my worthy friends, that truth appears the parent of virtue. But truth, I grant you, appears at first with an awkward mien at court. He who gains her first audience from a king, must have been endowed with no small

\* The emperor Trajan was used to compare the treasure of a prince to a swelled and distempered spleen, which enfeebles and consumes the rest of the body.



degree of courage. When flattery has taught the pernicious maxims, that princes reign for themselves alone; that royal independence consists in the gratifications of desire; and that even caprice is a state-law; the faithful and honest counsellor who undertakes to refuse this notable system, will not be graciously received: but let him be once heard, and he will gain the royal ear; one truth established, the rest may be poured upon him with rapidity, for they are sure of their effect; and the prince, instead of dreading, will anticipate the conclusion.

TRUTH will now derive charms from virtue, and virtue in its turn will lend embellishments to truth. It is indispensibly necessary that the latter should enlighten the mind; for the inclination of our nature to a good, whose value is not explained, is merely a blind, a vague, and uncertain instinct. But a desire to serve mankind is virtue, founded on the knowledge of remote and extensive consequences. To know the interests of humanity is the true study of a prince. Whatever is just, whatever is useful, that is truth, and the truth a king should investigate: it is the great band of society; in all business, in every transaction of life, it upholds the chain of moral duties; on mutual wants and mutual aids grafts human

happinefs, and makes the author of public good a partaker of the blessings he beftows. This is the moft becoming employment of a prince; to which he fhould dedicate all the hours of his life, to know \* mankind and himfelf; to pry into the fecret movements of the heart. This he fhould perfevere in with a determinate refolution, though alarming to flatterers; the temper, manners, and refources of his people, ought to be his chief ftudy, and the end and design of his minifters, and narrowly watch their conduct, to give a generous encouragement to all fuch as have a fpirit to call aloud for a redrefs of every grievance. The love of truth is founded upon thofe principles, Tiberius, and every prince, who is perfuaded, that juftnefs and uprightness is the only way to be great, will fee that thofe things conftitute the love of truth. If he poffeffes thofe fentiments, he will maintain his independance in the midft of a court; for it is there he muft be jealous of his liberty. The moft difficult part of your undertaking, will be to make him fenfible of this, and to this end all your en-

\* What their inclinations are, what things they are attached to, what things they refpect, what they love. Think that you behold their minds uncovered. Marc. Antonin. lib. ix.

deavours must point. When I am armed with your instructions, replied Tiberius, I will labour with the utmost assiduity and firmness. — Night drawing on, the conversation broke up.

THE emperor, observing that it has too often been the case, that the friends of mankind have been detested and abused by their kings and governors, who ought to be the fathers of the people. The goodness of Belisarius's heart, which made him the idol of the people, was the only crime which enraged his enemies, and was the occasion of my jealousy. I had better have imitated him than feared him.



CHAP. X.

NEXT day Belisarius walked abroad, and seated himself under an old oak, near the road, where he expected his visitors. How happy am I, says he, to have two virtuous men every day to bear me company! This alleviates my misfortunes! How agreeable is it to study the social interests of society! This softens my afflictions! The very imagination of having but the least share of being of any service to nations, raises me above myself.



This makes the man, who has it for his constant pursuit, resemble his Beneficent Creator.

THE emperor approaching, overheard those last words. You seem to be in raptures, said the emperor, when you think on a true beneficence; and indeed, of all the virtues, it affords the sweetest and most endearing satisfaction. The man is certainly happy, who enjoys so noble a pleasure!—The hero replied, if this supreme delight is not tasted with moderation, and conducted by wisdom and justice, it will degenerate into the opposite vice. Attend, O Tiberius, with patience and attention to what I have to say on this subject.

OF sovereign authority the highest act is the distribution of favours and marks of grace: this partakes of the nature of beneficence, and is therefore a pleasing exertion of power; but in the exercise of it, it is requisite that the prince should be guarded against seduction. The whole of his intelligence must arise from those who approach his person; and of that number there is not one who does not for ever inculcate, that the seat of majesty is in the court; that all regal splendor is derived from the brilliant appearance that enlivens the palace; and that the most valuable prerogative of the crown displays itself by a profusion of

favours, which are stiled the munificence of the sovereign. Gracious heaven! the munificence! it is the substance of the people he bestows; the spoils of the poor and indigent! Thus the prince is deceived by words: adulation and treachery besiege his throne; assiduity for ever pays its court; and the habit of refusing nothing gains upon the credulous sovereign, who little thinks of the tears extorted from the poor by the extravagance of the court: exultation fills the palace, and every room echoes with praises of the royal munificence. That munificence assumes the mien of virtue, and wealth is squandered without considering from whence it came. Alas! would kings reflect how their splendor grows out of the misery of others; and for the sake of an ungrateful crew, what a number groan in wretchedness! But, Tiberius, the prince who has one true friend will be sure to know this; and he will know besides, that true beneficence consists more in oeconomy than lavish distribution; that every partial grant is injustice to merit, and that from injustice spring all the worst evils that can distract a state.

You behold the munificence of sovereigns, said Tiberius, with an eye of severity.—I consider it in its true light, replied the hero, as a mere personal attachment, which, in the choice

of men for public offices, counteracts the natural course of justice, of nature, and of reason. For justice appropriates honours to virtue, and rewards to merit: for the arduous business of high employments nature brings forth great abilities and consummate talents; and surely reason directs that of men the best possible use should be made: but partiality confers the recompence due to virtue upon elegant and polished vice; and thus complaisance is preferred to honest zeal, adulation to truth, and meanness to elevation of soul. The superficial gift of pleasing, as if it were superior to every other gift of nature, aspires to all the favours of the crown, and generally engrosses them. From these premises it may be inferred, that partiality in the distribution of favours is the sure mark of a bad reign; and the prince who resigns into the hands of a favourite the honour of his crown and the welfare of his people, brings matters to this dilemma; he either sets a small value upon what he confides to his favourite, or he ascribes to his own choice the power of transforming the souls of men, as if he were able to mould a statesman or an hero out of a superannuated slave, or a youthful profligate.

THAT, said Tiberius, would be an attempt of the most absurd fatuity; but employments



abound in all states, which may be competently filled by men of very ordinary talents.

NOR a single employment, replied Belisarius, which does not demand, if not an able, at least an honest man; but royal favour is little solicitous about the one or the other: on the contrary, both are neglected, or, still worse, they are sure to meet all the little indignities of a scornful repulse. Hence every talent dies in its bloom, and every virtue withers in the bud. Of talents and of virtues emulation is the vivifying soul; but partiality is immediate death. The state in which this vice prevails may be compared to those waste and desolate tracts, where certain useful plants spontaneously shoot up, but are robbed of their nutriment by the briers and brambles that infest the land: and yet this image of physical evil does not fully express the political mischief; for under a reign of favouritism, the briers and the brambles are cherished, while every salutary plant is eradicated and trampled under foot.

You seem to assume, said Tiberius, that the royal favour invariably wants a due discernment of spirits, and is never able to make a right choice of men.

RARELY, if ever, replied Belisarius, inasmuch that if the servants of the public were chosen by lot, it would be a more infallible mode of

election. Partiality grants its favours to those only who intrigue for them; but merit disdains the little arts of intrigue; and that manly pride is decyphered by court interpreters into neglect of the sovereign, who therefore repays it with calm disdain, while the assiduity of low ambition reaps every advantage. To a prince thus prejudiced, what access can there be for the sage or the hero? Can they degrade themselves to the pliancy of slaves? Can dignity of mind submit to be a cringing candidate for court-favour? If nobility of birth gives a title to approach the person of the sovereign, what part is to be acted in a circle of favourites, by truth; integrity and honour? Are they likely to excel in the dexterities of flattery and dissimulation? Will they condescend to pry into the passions of their master, and explore the secret propensities of his heart? The characters of the sycophant, the dissembler, and the false friend, will be better played by others, who know how to touch the string that sounds gratefully to the royal ear, and to fly over that which will offend. Virtue would appear awkward in the attempt. The favourite will acquit himself with grace in all these particulars, but still it will ever be a million to one that he is unworthy of the distinction he enjoys.

THE favourite of a discerning, just, and equi-

table prince, interposed the emperor, will, most probably, be a man of integrity.

IN the court of a discerning, just, and equitable prince, replied Belisarius, there will be no such person as a favourite; such a prince will be worthy of friends, and he will have them: but favour will do nothing for them. A faithful servant would blush to be so enriched. If ever there was a faithful servant, the emperor Trajan had such an one to boast of in his minister Longinus. That true and worthy friend of his master was taken prisoner by the Dacians: the king of that people signified to the emperor, that, unless he acceded to the conditions of peace proposed to him, the captive minister should be put to death. And what was Trajan's answer? He left it to the honour of Longinus to decide, as Regulus had formerly done in his own case. Behold there the model of public characters! Those are the men I have in view! How glorious to be the friend of such a prince! Longinus saw the bright occasion, and with a sublime of virtue dispatched himself, lest pity should take possession of the emperor, and incline him to an act of partiality or personal regard.

I AM overpowered by the weight of your reasonings, said Tiberius: yes, I now perceive, that the public weal, when rightly understood,



gives no latitude to the affections of the sovereign: but are there not incidents unconnected with the interests of the people, in which he may reasonably give a scope to his private affections?

I ANSWER in the negative, replied Belisarius: the prince has no positive unconnected interest; every thing is relative to the whole. The smallest matters are of importance, and even the very civilities of a king must be addressed with caution. Royal favour, it has been said, is but a partial evil, and displays itself only in little things; but a deviation from the strict rule of right, even in trifles, will soon become habitual, and from small irregularities to great excess the progress is rapid. The circle of the sovereign's favour enlarges itself, and to bask in the sun-shine of his smiles, grows a general desire; each courtier strives to wriggle himself into his favour; and the fence thus thrown down, how shall a prince resist the ardor of importunity, and the frequency of solicitation? The fence that should guard him, my best Tiberius, is a determination of the will to be always just and good. When a principle of uprightness is known to guide the choice of men, it must then be merit, and merit alone, that can hope for preferment. Talents, exalted qualities, and eminent services, form the only admis-

fible claim : the candidate for honours must render himself worthy of them. Intrigue is discountenanced, and emulation is animated. Ambition is obliged to proceed by manly ways, and starting at the thought of being detected, abandons her little schemes of perfidy and cunning. How different is the case, when the prince is under the influence of personal affection? To gain the ascendant over that affection, becomes the business of all. He who possesses the arts of insinuation, and knows how to cabal with the servants of upper servants, pursues his drudgery through all its stages, and creeps up to preferment, meanly rising to splendid infamy. In the mean time the man of virtuous pride retires, and with the consent of all, he is resigned to oblivion. If it should happen, that for some important service, he is called from obscurity, to make one in the glittering crowd; or if it should be necessary to employ him on some occasion worthy of his abilities; standing unconnected with faction, he finds all parties combined against him, till at length it is visible, that he must either debase himself, by countermining the dark deeds of his enemies, or else surrender to them at discretion. The court where intrigue prevails, is a wild uproar of passions, in which the still voice of truth can never be heard. The public good is an unregarded

thing, and personal affection is the fountain of all praise and censure; partiality passes its decisions upon all occurrences; and the prince, encompassed round with falsehoods, distracted with doubt, suspicion and mistrust, scarcely ever puts an end to the waverings of his mind, but to terminate in error.

WHY does not he depend upon the evidence of facts? said Tiberius; facts are obstinate witnesses, and the testimony they give, is bold and loud.

FACTS, replied Belisarius, are not so obstinate as you may imagine; they take a new complexion from the contrariety of reporters. Every enterprize is judged by its event; and yet events too frequently give the palm to rashness, and defeat the best concerted schemes of genius and ability. Men are often more fortunate than wise, and there are occasions when the proposition is reversed. In either case, the characters of men may suffer much from prejudice, and that more particularly in a court, where the colours of good and evil are all derived from the prevailing opinions of party and faction.

JUSTINIAN, in his old age, is a melancholy example, said the emperor; he has been cruelly deceived!

ALAS! replied Belisarius, who has more rea-



son than myself to know what has been practised upon the credulity of Justinian? Who is better acquainted with the snares that faction laid for him? It was faction sent Narses into Italy, to interrupt the prosperity of Belisarius. The emperor little imagined that a minister of the finances would be a dangerous rival of the general: but Narses had his faction at court, and he soon found one in the camp: a spirit of dissension prevailed, and Milan, the bulwark of Italy, was lost. Narses was recalled, but too late; the tide of success was now ebbing away: Milan had been sacked, her inhabitants put to the sword, and all Liguria dismembered from the empire. That Narses was pardoned by the emperor, I most heartily rejoice; for the life of so great a man, \* we have one obligation, at least, to the decline of all military discipline. In the virtuous days of the republic, for the complicated crimes of disobedience, and the seduction of part of my army, Narses would have atoned with his head. I was recalled in my turn. To succeed me in the command of the army, eleven chiefs, all jealous of each other, were appointed by a new-fangled party. Discord prevailed in their councils, and they were defeated. By this means, we lost all Italy. The command was transferred to me, but I was a ge-

\* Pand. lib. 49. tit. 16.

neral without an army. I was obliged to traverse over Thracæ and Illyria in quest of soldiers. A scanty number, not exceeding four thousand, was collected together. With this rash-levied body, who had neither cloaths, horses, arms, or provisions, I marched into Italy. In this condition, what was to be done? With the utmost difficulty, I prevented Rome from falling into the hands of the enemy. The cabal at court rejoiced at this disastrous prospect of affairs: Things are going as we could wish, said they; he is in the last extremity, merely standing at bay a little, to be presently overwhelmed in ruin. Amidst the desolation of their country, I was the only object of their attention: to see my ruin accomplished, they would have compounded to see the state shook to its foundations. I demanded a supply of men, and I was retalled. Narses, with a powerful army, was appointed to succeed me; and, beyond all question, Narses had abilities to justify the choice. That he was named to the command, was perhaps a public benefit; but before I was wounded, the common-wealth received a stab: the ruin of Belisarius was purchased at the expence of the state. There lies the mischief of party. To raise or overturn a single man, an entire army, perhaps an empire, must be sacrificed.

ALAS! exclaimed Justinian, I now perceive the treacherous arts by which your glory was obscured. What an indelible stain to the emperor, thus to have believed the suggestions of your enemies!

My good neighbour, replied Belisarius, you are little aware of the refinement which court policy has acquired in the arts of destruction; you do not know the genius of intrigue, how active it is, how persevering, how assiduous, and implacable. Respectful and obsequious to the sentiments of the sovereign, it manages with caution, and works its effect by degrees, like the drop of water that only pozes at first through its fence, saps on by imperceptible strokes, and then in one rushing torrent bears down all. Cabal and party have this further advantage on their side, that the man of honour is without mistrust, and of course without precaution: he has nothing to oppose to the malice of his enemies, but his upright conduct, which is ever discoloured by envy, and his honest fame, of which the report that rings throughout the realm, expires and dies away at the gates of the palace. Envy alone is privileged within the verge of the court, and the character against which her shafts are aimed, is sure to fall a victim. In the course of human contingencies it cannot otherwise happen, but that every com-



mander must experience the vicissitudes of fortune, and find his train of victory sometimes interrupted; of every casualty envy takes advantage, and makes even accidents a ground of impeachment. Has the commander done all that was possible? he ought to have done better; any body but himself would have acted upon a different plan; he did not make a right use of his opportunities. The charge against him is aggravated, and the good he has done dwindles into nothing. The result is, that the man who can be useful to his country, is the most dangerous person in it. To the misfortune of the public, his downfall is effected; and to their greater misfortune, some worthless wretch is sure to rise upon his ruins. Another concomitant evil is, the impression made upon the minds of men, by the melancholy prospect of virtue in distress, and of vice exulting in prosperity. Public spirit grows languid at the reflexion, that all the fine incentives of honour are extinguished; guilt is emboldened, the evil conscience forgets to blush, and excesses of every kind riot with impunity. Such are the evils that attend a reign of favouritism. Judge yourself how such a disposition may precipitate the ruin of the state.

WITHOUT doubt, said Justinian, it is the most dangerous infirmity that ever byassed the

mind of a prince; but in an old man, who for thirty years has struggled to no purpose in the storms of fortune, and at last, in spite of all his efforts, sees the tempest ready to burst in ruin on his head: in one thus worn out with age and troubles, may it not be deemed an excusable weakness, if he endeavours to sweeten his cares, or at least to alleviate them, by indulging the private affections? I will answer no purpose to be too sanguine in our hopes; let us not deceive ourselves with flattering ideas of the public condition: even now the empire by its own weight is tottering to its fall. By a length of duration all its vigour is exhausted, and it must share at last the common fate which brought the empires of Belus and Cyrus to their dissolution. Like them it has flourished in splendor, and like them it must moulder into ruin.

I AM no fatalist, replied Belisarius, in regard to revolutions of government: that would be to give a sanction to our present degeneracy of spirit, and make despair systematical. That all sublunary things, and kingdoms amongst them, perish and die away, I am not now to learn; but that nature has traced the bounds of existence to all its productions seems a position rather problematical. The body natural indeed has its period when the animal

functions decay, and calmly we welcome death; but there never does occur a moment, in which it is allowed us to despair of the commonwealth. The body-politic, it must not be dissembled, is subject to convulsions that shake its frame, to slow disorders that consume its vigour, and to spasms that elevate for a while, to plunge it into deeper dejection afterwards. Civil contention breaks the constitutional strength, repose is apt to relax, and activity strains all its efforts; but none of these accidents are mortal in their nature. By this, nations after having struggled under various misfortunes have been reanimated, and saved from the very brink of destruction. Old age is unknown to the body-politic; the declension of states is not therefore marked out; the limits of their time is not drawn; no doubt but the constitution of the empire is now enfeebled, and sunk into a languishing state. It behoves us to discern where the latent poison lies, to trace the distemper from its first springs; this will furnish ample matter for further conference. Belisarius agreed, that this should be entered upon their next meeting.





## C H A P. XI.

**J**USTINIAN repaired to Belisarius much sooner than usual the next day, and was full of impatience to have those wounds fully probed, which had brought the state into such a languishing condition. Belisarius went as low as the reign of Constantine. Is it not to be lamented, said he, that so bright a genius should be so much mistaken in the propriety of the means to produce the end desired, and to use more vigorous means for the extinction of the empire, than would have been necessary to retrieve its ancient honours? to abolish the Prætorian bands, to adopt into the state the children of those, who were incapable of giving them instruction\*; the authority of the prefect distributed into more hands†, were masterly strokes of human wit. The lands upon

\* When the parent was unable to maintain his child, the state took the charge upon itself; and the infant was educated at the expence of the public: and this law Constantine directed to be engraved on marble, that he might perpetuate it through all successive ages.

† Zosim. lib. ii. cap. 33.

the frontiers assigned to the veteran soldiers, who formed an Agrarian army for the defence of the empire; this was indeed a wise institution, a large and comprehensive policy. Why did not he adhere entirely to a plan so just and simple? He did not see, or he was unwilling to see, that, to transplant the seat of empire, it must be torn up by the very roots. In vain did he propose to himself that the city he was founding should be a second Rome; in vain was the latter despoiled of its richest ornaments for the decoration of the former: it was a mere theatrical shifting of scenery, the gaudy spectacle of a pantomime.

You astonish me, said Tiberius, interrupting him; I was used to think the capital of the world more advantageously situated upon the Bosphorus, in the middle of two seas, and between Europe and Asia, than in the heart of Italy, upon the banks of a river, which scarce deserves the name of navigable.

CONSTANTINE thought as you do, replied Belisarius, and he was mistaken. The state which is obliged to carry war into foreign territories, must be governed by a sound internal policy, compact within itself, and easy to be defended. Such was the advantage of Italy. The hand of nature seemed to have

made it a residence for the masters of the world. The mountains and the sea, which inclose it, formed a strong barrier against invasion: guard but the Alps, and Rome was guarded too. If that fence proved too weak to repel the enemy, the Appennines afforded a safe retreat, and served as a rampart to half Italy. It was there that Camillus gave the Gauls a signal overthrow; and in that spot Narses obtained his brilliant victory over Totila.

At present the empire has no fixed immoveable centre; but lies open and exposed to all the assaults of fortune. Ask the Scythian, the Sarmatian, and the Sclavonian, whether the Heber, the Danube, and the Tanais, are barriers to obstruct the march? On that side Byzantium is our only fence; that its walls are not in due repair is not the circumstance that grieves me most.

When Rome was the seat of empire, the established policy of government was able to carry the vigour of its laws from the centre to the extremity of the state: all Italy was under its immediate influence, within the reach of the administration: the law gave the tone to the manners, and the manners in their turn made grave and faithful ministers of justice. We have indeed now the same institutions



but as all is transplanted from the place of its growth, the consequence is, that every thing droops, as if regretting its native soil. The empire is not collected in itself, as it was before: it is enlarged, and thereby weakened. The national character has lost its spirit: even the endearing name of country is gone from amongst us. Italy was renowned for men who imbibed with their first breath the love of their country, and grew to manhood amidst the exercises of the *Campus Martius*. At present, where is the cradle, and where the school of warriors? The Dalmatians, the Illyrians, and the Thracians, who are now mingled with us, are in fact as foreign as the Numidians and the Moors. No common interest to unite them in one common cause, no kindred spirit to actuate and inspire them. *Remember that you are Romans*, said a commander to his soldiers, in the days of the old republic; and that short harangue was of efficacy to brace their nerves for labour, and to render them invincible in battle. What animating topic have we to insist upon? Shall we say, *Remember that you are Armenians, Numidians, or Dalmatians?* We are no longer one body-politic, and there lies the cause of our debility. The projectors of our new settlement were not aware that to form the coaliti-

on. that unity of interests, which we call our country, requires the progressive toil of ages, the slow and imperceptible working of sentiment, habit, and opinion. Our new city was embellished by Constantine with statues of Roman heroes; but alas! the policy was ineffectual, for the men whose images we only saw, lived and breathed the flame of liberty in the capitol! The genius that inspired them, did not embark on board our ships; we imported inanimate marble only. Paulus Emilius, the Scipios, and the Catos, are silent here and mute; they are foreigners at Byzantium; but at Rome they harangued the people, and the people understood and felt them.

I do not perceive, said Justinian, but the empire, since the seat of government was removed, has enjoyed a truer state of peace and security, than it knew at Rome for a long series of years. The people there had fallen into degeneracy, and the senate sunk deeper in shame and servitude.

WHEN the administration is confided to improper hands, replied Belisarius, the strength and dignity of every state will be impaired, and a train of calamities must ensue. At Rome, however, nothing but one good reign was wanting to recal the constitution to its first principles. Take a view of Adrian's admini-

stration: the state seemed under him to rise out of its ruins. Behold Marcus Aurelius upon the throne: to what an height of glory and magnificence was the condition of the empire raised by the conduct of that excellent prince! Roman virtue has been often eclipsed, but not extinguished: whenever a prince appeared of a genius to rekindle the spirit of his country, the latent fire was always ready to mount into a blaze. But alas! every principle of virtue is now destroyed: the seed must be sown again; and that must be the arduous task of a long reign, founded in justice, moderation, and wisdom. Nothing but a prodigy of this sort can redeem us in this juncture. Our very victories may be the ruin of the state. We have an hundred enemies to cope with, and those enemies have but one. An idea is conceived that they may be all subdued; and yet one is no sooner crushed, but he rises again; a fresh foe is ever ready to find us employment, and by a rapidity of succession, they give breathing time to each other. By this diversion of our arms a constant alarm is kept up, and the state, thus distracted, grows feeble every day. The march of armies to various and distant places consumes our strength; the vigour of our measures strains every nerve, to relax us more in the end; and every victory is a wound



which has not time to close. Thus, after an exertion of all the powers of the empire to maintain its own importance, a single day shall shake it to its foundation, and render the labour of twenty years abortive in a single hour. Recollect how often, under the present reign, our standard has been hurried about the world, from the Tiber to the Euphrates, and from the Euphrates to the Danube! And now what is the consequence? what is the fruit of so many victories, under Mundus, Germanicus, Salomon, Narses, and myself, if I may be added to the number? A peace is all we have obtained at last.

AND if our victories exhaust us, said the emperor, it is right to bring things to that conclusion.

To buy a peace, replied Belisarius, is not the way to prevent the calamities of war. The savage of the North has nothing in view but booty; and if he is sure of gaining it, his motive to frequent incursions grows the stronger. The Persian need only spread an alarm every year through our fairest provinces in Asia, and he goes back loaded with our money. A new way of exterminating the plunderer, by holding forth the booty that invites him! The price of peace becomes the principle of war; and our emperors, by exhausting their

subjects, have pampered and inflamed the avarice of their enemies.

You affect me deeply, said Justinian; what bulwark would you oppose to the invasions of the enemy?—A good army, replied Belisarius; and, above all, a people free and happy. When the barbarians rush into our provinces, they are attracted by the love of plunder; and though they leave desolation and hatred behind them, yet their purpose is answered if they leave impressions of terror also. The case is different with an empire that would maintain its possessions in security. If it does not endear its government to mankind, it may as well abdicate; for it is a self-evident proposition, that all authority founded on fear will grow weak at every remove from the capital, till at last, fading by degrees, it is lost in distance. To rule by the medium of fear from Taurus to the Alps, and from Caucasus to the foot of Atlas, is an impossibility in politics. If the subject groans under the weight of his grievances, and power supports itself by the sweat of his brow, of what moment is it to him whether Romans or Persians are his oppressors? The authority that burdens us will never be well defended; and the nation that has not spirit to resist oppression, will crouch with tame acquiescence under the first deliverer that ap-

pears. Would you give stability to government? lay your foundation in the affections of mankind; and the affections of mankind are ever attached to the principles of humanity, of beneficence, integrity, public faith, and zeal for the happiness of millions. Those are the virtues that command a willing people. The spirit of the constitution is then diffused over the whole dominion, alive and active in each distant part; the people are all as one hand and one heart, and every province is the seat of government.

I SHALL have frequent occasion to allude to myself, continued Belisarius; and, my worthy young man, said he to Tiberius, by appealing to my experience you have made all apology for egotism unnecessary. When I had the conduct of the war in Africa, I considered those regions as part of my native country. The regular and strict discipline, which I established throughout my army, procured the good will of mankind, and attracted plenty from every quarter. In a little time I had the satisfaction of seeing my camp resorted to as a sanctuary by every various people, who crowded to my standard and listed under me. The day which saw me enter Carthage at the head of a victorious army, did not hear a single groan; neither the quiet nor the usual em-



ployments of the citizens suffered on the occasion: industry and commerce pursued their interests, as if it had been a time of profound peace; and in return for this benefit felt by all orders of men, it was in my power to become the king of a people who called me their common father. The same happened to me in Italy: there the native inhabitants gathered about me in crowds, resigning themselves to the empire; and at Ravenna I received the supplications of the Goths imploring their conqueror to be their sovereign. Behold here the influence, the empire of humanity. Do not suspect that I am here my own panegyrist: all my merit consisted in following the lessons the very barbarians gave me. Yes, even the barbarians can boast their Titus and their Marcus Aurelius. Theodoric and Totila deserved the love of human kind. Ye cities of Italy! exclaimed Belisarius, what a contrast have you seen between us and the barbarians! At Naples in particular, my eyes beheld men, women, and children, slaughtered in one common carnage. I flew to their assistance: I snatched the unhappy, the innocent victims from the fury of an incensed soldiery: but I was single in opposition to them, and my entreaties were lost in air: the men whose duty it was to second me, were intent on plunder.

## BELISARIUS. 113

The same place was reduced by the generous Totila. Thrice-happy prince! he had the glory of saving it from the ravage of his troops. His deportment was that of a tender father in the midst of his family. Humanity cannot display a scene more truly pathetic than this generous prince exerting his best offices for the protection of a people that surrendered to his arms. It was the same at Rome; that very Rome which saw the officers of the empire, in the midst of all the horrors of a famine, carrying on the detestable trade of a monopoly. It was in this manner our enemies conciliated the affections of mankind. Their justice and moderation hurt us more than their valour.

How, on our part, did we counteract their virtues? In no shape whatever: the inhumanity, the avarice, and tyranny of our commanders leagued with the enemy, and served their cause. I had no sooner resigned the command in Italy, than the same Goths, whose proffered crown I had just refused, with one general consent, with a kind of epidemic spirit, kindled to indignation by the malversation of those who succeeded me, resolved at once to shake off the yoke. Hence the reign of Totila, and all the misfortunes of Italy. When I had subdued the Vandals, it was my ambition to settle terms of amity between the empire and the Moors; and I

thought I had succeeded to my satisfaction; but my back was scarcely turned when our honourable plunderers, our chiefs, who made war a gainful trade, our illustrious sons of riot and rapacity, infringed every treaty I had made, and let loose the most horrible violence to pillage their cities and desolate their fields. By desperation the Moors were soon roused to vengeance, and our provinces were deluged with blood. From oppression sprung revolt, and all the bands of peace were rent asunder.

FROM the same causes in the heart of the empire the same effects have been produced. Imbecility in ministers, avarice in pro-consuls, inhumanity and despotism in the governors of cities and of provinces; these are the enormities which I have seen in every quarter. To these it is owing, that every department of government is now become an intolerable charge to the people. In order to enforce a passive obedience under the burthen, recourse is had to measures of the most grievous nature: the militia has been abolished, and the subject has been excluded from the sacerdotal order; nay, the right of alienating their property has been wrested from them; and, to crown the whole with what will scarcely be believed, they are deprived of the miserable liberty of becoming bondmen. Can it be expected that, harrassed



thus cruelly, the people will be reconciled to the yoke that galls them? Can there exist in their idea any ties of interest, or of duty, between them and their oppressors? The burst of every groan that despair and misery extort, is instantly proclaimed treason; and armies are marched to carry fire and sword through the provinces. A new and cruel way of reducing mankind to obedience by their total ruin! and then, of what use are subjects thus reduced, and broken-hearted under a load of grievances? A well-governed people should be at once both spirited and complying; and both these qualities would unite, were they not prevented by the pride and arrogance of little tyrants, who too often make the reign of a well-disposed prince an odious system of cruelty and arbitrary power.

It is upon ministers, and all the little substitutes of authority, that a sovereign must depend for the love or the hatred of mankind. He ought therefore to watch them with a careful and a jealous eye. They are too often the most cruel enemies he has; for of all the evils that can attend a prince, the aversion of his people is the worst, and yet that is brought upon him by his officers of state. Whatever they dare for the gratification of spleen, pride, avarice, and all their mean capricious passions, it is

all, in ministerial language, the direction of the sovereign; it is for the support of government. Though they are the planners of every pernicious project, yet, in carrying it into execution, they are, if you will believe them, but servants of the crown; and thus the prince is made the involuntary unconscious scourge of a people he loves. My dear Tiberius, continued the hero, if ever your royal master has the happiness of embracing you as his friend, let it be your advice never to slacken the reins of authority, that all who are under it may feel the curb of justice. Every act of petty tyranny committed in the name of the prince, is sure to sully the lustre of his crown with the tears of the afflicted. An evil administration is a libel upon the character of the sovereign. But when iniquity is controuled, when corruption is checked, and the grievances of the subject redressed by a patriot prince, the complaints of injured men will indeed be addressed to the throne, but no murmurings against it will ever be heard. The indignation of the subject will be pointed at its proper object; it will pursue the authors of public mischief, while the good and upright sovereign still possesses the affections of a grateful people.

THERE is nothing, interposed Justinian, more beautiful in theory, than a prince attend-

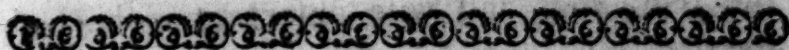
ing to the movements of every minute wheel in the great machine of government. But the objects are too complicated, and he would be distracted by the multiplicity of views. To hear the complaints of the subject, and to examine things to the bottom, so as to decide in all cases with justice and moderation, would indeed be an illustrious task, but it is greatly above the powers of any prince whatever.

THOSE are the phantoms of difficulty, replied Belisarius, that are conjured up to deter him from the task; but those phantoms, when examined with a stedfast eye, discover themselves to be mere mockery, and they vanish. The art of governing, we shall see to-morrow, is by no means so complicated, as politic men would make us believe. Farewel, my friends. You see how, of my own accord, I now engage myself more deeply in this discussion than I at first intended. To rule ideal kingdoms is a kind of castle-building which the imagination of man is fond of indulging; and there are few, I believe, who in their visionary reign and their dreams of power, do not, like myself, think themselves capable of regulating the fate of empires. Political theories, said Justinian, are often the delirious chimeras of the vulgar, but they are, at the same time, the noble speculations of the sage and the philosopher.



JUSTINIAN withdrew, much affected with the reasonings and wise observations he had heard. His courtiers at supper observed that the state never was so happy, nor in a more flourishing condition than at present. It must certainly be so, replied the emperor, for I observe you riot in abundance; the empire must be happy, for I see you always in a state of dissipation. The people are no more than a mere cypher, and the court with you is the empire. Their countenances changed at this, and they were confounded. They concluded among themselves that his frequent conferences with Tiberius was the occasion of the reserve that he had shewn to them of late. Popular virtue and humanity, said they, has over-heated the mind of this young zealot. Such as him is dangerous about a court; we must endeavour to have him removed.





## C H A P. XII.

**T**HE blind old hero met his two guests the next day, not knowing any thing of the intrigue of the court party. He began with observing, that the sovereign who would be a real, and not a nominal prince, should always reduce things to their most simple principles. He should in the first place consider the true interest of his people, and what they might reasonably expect from his conduct — That is a large field of contemplation indeed, replied Tiberius:—Belisarius replied, there is no difficulty, nor any thing to perplex it, for the wants of one single person is the wants of the whole; so that each of us may always easily know what is good for the whole kingdom. As for example, Tiberius, was you a farmer, what would you expect to be the duty of your sovereign? Tiberius replied, I should expect my property preserved, and an unmolested right, after all the dues of the crown were paid, to enjoy the fruits of my labour and industry. I should expect that I and my family should be protected from injustice, violence, and oppression.—You answer well, replied Belisarius; this is an answer

to the whole : every freeman and citizen requires the same. The prince on his part, says Belisarius, demands from his people the necessary supplies, and obedience to his laws, with a proper force to support the authority of government. This is just, and easily understood. Now, what is the concern of the people with regard to one another ? To be honest, industrious, not to over-reach nor defraud one another, but to live in peace and harmony, each peaceably enjoying his own possessions ; and this is human happiness. Twelve tables, at one time, comprized the laws of Rome ; and that time was at least as eligible as the present. What we call just, is the balance of what is useful, and the liquidation of what is coming to each individual from the aggregate of public good. Let equity adjust this account, and the code which directs it, need not be long. But equity is now embroiled with complications, that have swelled to an unwieldy size. This mischief is owing to the capricious detail of an arbitrary disposition, which sets up its own caprice in the place of law, and then makes the law as vague and uncertain as that very caprice itself : it is owing to a poor pusillanimity, that with solicitude is ever inventing new snares to entangle civil liberty : it is owing to the pride and jealousy of power, which never thinks it can make



its weight sufficiently felt : and in short, it is owing to a vain desire of superintending a multiplicity of minute objects, which would all work themselves clear, and be properly adjusted without any such superintendence. A digest has been made in the present reign of edicts and decrees without number ; but after all, it is the school for lawyers, and not for the people ; whereas it is the people who ought to be instructed in their duties and their rights. Every citizen ought, in the first instance, to be his own judge : it is fit, therefore, that every citizen should know distinctly and with precision what is prescribed, \* forbid, and permitted by the law. To this end there need only be a few good laws, simple, clear, sensible, and easy in their application to the actions of men. This would facilitate the administration of justice, and abridge the detail of subtleties that now entangle it. For when the rights and the duties annexed to civil-conduct, are universally felt and understood, the subject exults in his security, and acquiesces in subordination : he perceives the ascertained degree of political liberty, which he gains in return for the resignation of his natural privileges to the authority of the state ; and finding his own private advantage in the public safety, he learns to reverence the wisdom of that in-

\* Pand. lib. 1. tit. 3.

stitution, which has united both in so beautiful a connexion. I would ask to what reason is it to be assigned, that the subject is so often refractory to the authority of government? It is because the laws, which limit and abridge the liberty of the people, are ever expounded with rigour; while, on the other hand, those which favour natural freedom, receive too often a negligent, a temporizing construction. But this abuse would be effectually remedied by the fair simplicity of a popular code, or a system adapted to the capacity of the whole community; from whence it would result, that the judges, observing mankind sufficiently instructed in the rules of right, nay in a capacity to appeal from them to a known, precise, and determinate law, would be upon their guard not to make it comply with occasions, or to vary the spirit of it according to their own discretion.

OF laws, which are designed to entrench upon the rights of the subject, those that fasten upon property are the worst, and most liable to abuse. They are not indeed levelled at the lives and liberties of the people; but the hands of the people are never tied up, but with an intention to plunder them. Of the excesses, moreover, committed by the officers of the revenue, there is scarcely ever one that does not involve in it the crime of avarice. This then is the

first object to which the sovereign's eye should be directed; it should be his first care to establish the collection of his taxes upon the clearest and most intelligible system. While imposts are multiplied, and the laws \* that establish the taxation, continue vague, complex, and uncertain; the administration of this whole department will ever be captious, fraudulent, and oppressive. These laws, therefore, must be rendered as simple as possible; they must be penned with accuracy and precision; and the tax itself, that indispensable demand of government, should be equal, easy, and founded on the fitness of things: it should be one general impost, though varied in its application to sundry wise and good purposes; and finally, it should be uniform throughout the realm, like the tribute which Sicily † paid with pleasure to the Romans, or like that which was levied in Asia, ¶ in proportion to the annual increase or loss, and gained for Cæsar, the author of it, the affections of man-

\* Under the emperors taxes were levied not by law and reason, but at the will of the emperors. Buling. De tribut. ac vectig. P. R.

§ Because neither war nor peace without war, nor can either of them be maintained without taxes. Liv. lib. i.

† All Sicily paid tenths. Buling. ubi supra.

¶ See App. De bello civ. lib. 5. Larger or smaller taxes were exacted from Asia, according to the plenty or poverty of the year. Dio. lib. 45.



kind. Were the finances thus regulated, fraud would not be able to entrench itself in the labyrinths of law, and the † absurdity of edicts: but the right established upon clear and simple principles, would carry the clearest evidence of truth along with it, and that truth would draw the line to circumscribe the power of the officers. Thus the laws of taxation, by ceasing to be arbitrary, would cease to be detestable.

You are aware, said the emperor, of the reasoning that encounters these principles: make taxation simple, and you reduce it at the same time.—I wish to do so, replied Belisarius.—But, resumed Justinian, if the people are left too much at ease, by a natural consequence they grow lazy, arrogant, rebellious, and untractable.—Gracious Heaven! exclaimed Belisarius: will affuring to men the fruits of their labour, give them an aversion for industry? Will men become rebels, because their happiness is secured and promoted? But the fear is, that they will prove arrogant! Alas! I know that little tyrants would be glad to see

† The emperors laid a duty upon urine, dust or-dure, dead bodies, smoke, air, &c. There were rights of the turf, the highway, storage, duties upon carriages, beasts of burthen, &c. See Buling. ubi supra,

them crouch like slaves under the master's lash. But I would desire to know, to whom should the subject bend, while his conduct is free from reproach or guilt? There is no power on earth, but that of the laws and of the legal sovereign, to which an honest member of society owes any deference. I would ask further, Will usurpation be as sure of having obedience paid to it, as will that mild authority, which creates for itself a kind of paternal empire over the hearts of men, by works of beneficence, and by generous deeds that call for gratitude, affection, and esteem? Believe me, I know the character of the people: they are not what they are represented. Are they dispirited, nay disaffected? It is owing to their grievances. Is their temper sowered? and are they grown reluctant to command? It is because they find themselves for ever acquiring, and never sure of possessing. In sober sadness, this is the truth: but it is discoloured, with art; designing men dogmatize on the subject, and they endeavour to give their falshood the air and sanction of appearing systematical. The principle upon which they ground themselves, is, that the race of man lives in suberviency to a very small part of the species, and that the world was made for the use of themselves and a few leading men.—It is an in-

conceiveable pride, said Justinian, and yet a pride too common to the human mind. — Not so common as you imagine, replied Belisarius; we hear it indeed often, but it is from men who are acting a part; it is a sort of paradox in politics that never had one sincere believer. I will venture to say, there never yet existed a person of common-sense, however eminent his station, who, upon a comparative view of himself and the people, who support, who nourish, and defend him, did not shrink back with humility into himself; for he feels his imbecility, his necessities, and his state of dependence. His pride is a mask, a mere assumed character; but the mischief is, he is so practised in the character, that he has learned to play it well, and to impose upon his audience. May heaven preserve your royal friend, my worthy Tiberius, from this fatal illusion! That he may be effectually preserved from it, direct his attention to the early periods and primitive condition of civil society: he will then observe three classes of men, each subsisting in a state of reciprocal aid and dependence: the husbandman, in the first place, employed in the cultivation of the earth for the support of life; the artificer, secondly, whose occupation it was to give to the materials of the earth their relative forms and fitness for use; and, thirdly,



the statesman, or able politician, who consecrated himself to the arts of government for the good order and well-being of society. In this federal union not one of the parties is useless or inactive: the advantage of mutual succour is circulated in full exertion through all the members, according to the powers of each; and thus bodily force, labour, and industry, intellectual ability, the faculties of the mind, superior talents, and eminent virtues, all conspire and act in concert for the general good. This order of things, simple, natural, and regular as it may appear, is the true analysis of government: these are the original forms into which political oeconomy must resolve itself; these the first principles to which it is reducible.

You cannot but observe what an outrage it would be against all good sense and order, if any one of these classes should revolt against the others: you must see that they are all equally dependant, and equally conducive to each other; and that if a preference can be ascribed to any one in particular, it must to the husbandman, inasmuch as the support of life is the first great principle and desire of nature; the art, therefore, that nourishes man must be the first of arts. But as this art accomplishes its end by methods easy and sure; as it is ex-

posed to no danger, and requires an exertion of the most common and ordinary powers; it is right that the more delicate arts, which demand talents, virtues, and the most refined acquirements, should meet with the highest encouragement. For this reason, therefore, the arts that administer to the first wants of life, will not be held in the greatest estimation, and indeed they do not aspire to it. But inasmuch as it would be impolitic on the one hand, to over-rate them, so it would be unjust on the other, and repugnant to the interests of humanity, to degrade them into contempt.

Let your friend, my good Tiberius, be upon his guard against the approaches of this stupid disdain: on the contrary, it will behove him to cherish, as the nurse of himself and of human kind, this too much despised, though excellent and beneficial branch of industry. It is just, in the arrangement of things, that the people should labour for the two other classes of society, which co-operate with them for the good of the whole, and contribute largely to the support of that power which forms the defence of the community. The earth was ordained to supply the nurture of man, and to those who encrease its fertility, the first maintenance is due; this is justice to the husband-

man; and the state, in rating him to the charges of government, must be \*careful to lay the tax upon his redundances only. If the sole recompence of hard and unremitting labour were no more than the mere privilege of leading an undesirable and wretched life, the cultivators of the earth could no longer be deemed a part of the political association, but would remain in a state of slavery: their condition would be intolerable; they would rust from their rank, turn order into anarchy, or else put a stop to the propagation of so many miserable beings, and so annihilate the rank itself.

It must be allowed, said Justinian, that they are too much depressed; but happily little is wanting to that race of men, enured as they are to penury and labour! Beyond the excitements of appetite and the first wants of nature their ambition never rise; let them have bread, and they have content along with it.

To say the truth, my good neighbour, replied Belisarius, one would imagine that you had lived your days in courts, for you are master of the language. What you have now advanced, rings for ever in the ear of a prince,

\* This was the maxim of Henry IV. of France; and of all good kings.



that he may be the more readily induced to pillage his people, and that he may do it without remorse. The people, it is true, have not the inordinate wants, which luxury has created in the higher ranks of life; and therefore, they are more likely to be reasonable in their complaints and their demands. The more frugal and modest their way of life, the more sober and temperate their manners, the stronger is the presumption that when they remonstrate their grievances, they do it with sufficient provocation. In the court dictionary, to want the necessaries of life implies the want of ability to maintain twenty useless horses, and as many idle drones in livery: in the honest meaning of the simple husbandman, it is to want wherewithal to nourish a poor old father, bending under years and infirmities, to rear a little race of infants, whose feeble arms are yet unfit for work, and to comfort a virtuous wife, who is either breeding or nursing a new subject of the state; it is, in plain rural language, to want these things, and to want, besides, the proper seeds to deposit in the ground, a well stored granary against an hard season and a year of scarcity, and in age and in sickness the comforts, and the succours, which weary nature has occasion for. Oh! my friends, is it not manifest that the fruits of agri-

culture are destined in the first place, and of justice due to those who labour to make the earth more productive? The destination is holy, and should be kept more sacred and inviolable than all the treasure in the depositories of Janus.

ALAS! said the emperor, there are times of public calamity, when government may exert a dispensing power, and state-necessity is then the law which imposes new burthens and taxes on the people.

It should be a case of the last extremity indeed, replied Belisarius; every superfluity should be first brought into the common stock, all resources should be exhausted, and no way left of saving the state but by the ruin of the people. That state-necessity I am a stranger to: the occasion for that dispensing power I have never seen † But to represent things in their true point of light; do you know where the mischief lies, that makes the honest husbandman groan in misery? It rests with that superior class, as it is called, who pass away the hours in idleness and riot: by them the whole burthen \* is thrown upon honest indus-

† Marcus Aurelius, in a pressing necessity, sold the furniture of his royal palace, rather than overload the people with new taxes.

Aurel. Vict.

\* Salv. lib. iv.

try. They reap almost all the advantages of the civil union, and yet contribute the least to its support; they do nothing for the strength and dignity of the government, which gives them so much ease and enjoyment. They repay nothing for the benefits they receive, and yet in their case it seems a privileged, an honourable insolvency. Let this abuse be altogether reformed: let the necessary charge of government fall in just proportions upon every member of the community; let it be diffused through all orders of men, according to the means and abilities of each, and the burthen will then be light and equitable.

WHAT has not been attempted, said the emperor, in order to establish this just equality so much desired? \* Have not the Decurions, who were base enough in the assessment of the cities committed to them, to over-rate some, in order to give undue exemptions to others †, been adjudged by the law to be burnt alive?

ALAS! replied Belisarius, I know that little favour is shewn to those unhappy wretches. For not sufficiently grinding the face of the poor, they are laid in irons, unmercifully scourged and buffeted, and persecuted under

\* Cod. Leg. de Annona.

† Cod. lib. i. de Censib.



the name of Justice, with every barbarity, till they envy even the lot of slaves§. But for the regents of provinces, for proconsuls, and other ministers, are there rods and dungeons ready? And supposing there were, of what use are pains and penalties, while the mouth of complaint is stopped, and the cries of misery are suffocated? Let laws abate of their severity, so they have a free course, and injured men are permitted to prosecute their legal remedy.

THE liberty to complain of grievances, said Justinian, has been the right of the people in all periods.

IT has so, replied Belisarius, it is a constitutional right, but the exercise of it has depended upon the will and pleasure of subordinate tyrants. \* Have not attempts been made to attach the persons of presidents and prefects, that cities and provinces might be at liberty to appeal to the court for a redress of injuries, in which those very men were either principals or accomplices? And could any method be taken more sure of procuring impunity for the offenders? The law directs its ministers† to prevent violence and exactions; and those

§ Traite de l'Orig. du gouv. Fr.

\* Traite de l'Orig. du gouv. Fr.

† Pand. lib. i. tit. 18

very ministers are the party accused. The law imposes a religious duty upon the governors of provinces\* to protect the weak from the oppression of the stronger; and those very governors have at once the means of oppressing, and even the power of doing it under the sanction of that very law which forbids them †. The law defines the gross sum of the tax, but presidents and proconsuls make the assessment upon individuals ¶, and they never want sophistry to give a colour to their exactions. The law gives a right of citing the tools and little instruments of the governor before the governor himself ‡; but from his tribunal there lies no § appeal to the sovereign, and this, we are told, is grounded upon a maxim, That the prince raises none to that high station, but men of approved wisdom and uprightness, who can do no wrong. But cannot the prince be deceived in his choice? To trust the welfare of a whole people to the promised faith of one man, is a monstrous absurdity in government. Justinian was aware of this, and to reform the abuse re-established the Prætorship, with full powers and instructions to enquire

\* Pand. lib. 1. tit. 18.

† Ibid.

¶ Novell. 28.

‡ Cod. Theod. lib. 1. tit. 10.

§ Pand. lib. 1. tit. 11.

into the conduct and depredations of the governors ¶. But in doing this he created a new order of tyrants, whose residence in the provinces gave an opportunity to corruption to spread as it were by contagion, till they, who were meant to be the guardians of the people, became confederates in profligacy, and encreased the number of vile usurpers. Hence the impunity with which vice lords it through the empire; hence too, the shameful imbecility of relaxed and ineffectual laws.\*

WHAT would you do in such a case, said the emperor? I would listen, replied Belisarius, to the outcries of the injured, and proud oppression should tremble for its guilt.

THERE is, among the various institutions established by the princes of the empire, one that I reverence, and fervently wish to see enforced according to the true principles and spirit of its design. When in the number of persons, to whom the authority of government is delegated, I perceived a set of officers sent into the provinces † with special powers to hear the complaints of the people, in order to trans-

¶ Novell. 24.

\* Vide Pand. lib. xlviii. Leg. Jul. repetundarum; leg. Jul. de annona; leg. Jul. peculatus. Cod. Theod. lib. iv. tit. 12, Cod. Just. lib. i. De censib.

† They were called CURIOSI.



mit a memorial of grievances to the emperor, I felt my heart expand with the spirit of humanity. My vows are offered up, my constant prayers, that the prince may give that important office all its weight and dignity; that he may nominate to so glorious an employment his select and most virtuous friends, the men of approved integrity and honour; that amidst the awful pomp of religious ceremony, he may receive, at the foot of the altar, the solemn oath, by which the chosen patriots shall bind themselves to their prince, their country, and their God, never to betray the interests of the weak and helpless to the pride and arrogance of domineering spirits; that he may each year depute this honest band as the guardians of our civil rights; and that he may, as soon as their high commission is executed, recal them to his presence, lest corruption have time to tamper with their virtue. Were things in this train, what glorious effects might be expected from such a visitation! The consequences are now before my eyes! Behold, on the arrival of the just and upright man, how Liberty rears its head in the provinces, and smiles content! how Tyranny and Oppression look abashed and tremble! Behold the governors, the proconsuls, and their deputies turn pale and shrink at the tribunal of their judge, who is surrounded

by a grateful assembly of the people, and hailed as their father and their avenger! It is the complaint of kings, that the Truth does not reach them! But oh, my friends! she endeavours to make her way to them, and even to breakthrough their guards, in defiance of swords and peril. Yet how easy might the access be made! It would not then be the seditious outcry of a tumultuous people, but the calm remonstrance of the wise and good offering up, with respectful deference, at the foot of the throne, the supplications of humanity. How rare would be the flagrant outrages committed in the very name of the sovereign, if thus annually they were to undergo a severe and strict examination, while the sword of justice is ready in the sovereign's hand to fall on every guilty head!

Of all ranks in society, the military class is that where licentiousness and disorder are likely to prevail with impunity. But let discipline be enforced with due rigour throughout the army; let partiality never glide into the administration of justice; and a few examples, such as Justinian has held forth to the world, will controul the wildest and most daring spirits.

To what example do you allude, said the emperor?—You shall hear, replied Belisarius: it is, in my judgment, the brightest passage of

his reign. The generals who commanded at Colchis, had imbrued their hands in royal blood. The king of the Lazians, even then in alliance with the emperor, was inhumanly murdered. Without delay Justinian sent Athanasius, one of the most distinguished senators, with instructions and full power to hold an enquiry into the conduct of the delinquents, and, after a full hearing, to pronounce judgment, and see the sentence of the law executed on the guilty. Athanasius, who was now judge in the last resort, conducted this important business with all the pomp and solemnity the occasion required. On one of the smaller hills of Caucasus he fixed his tribunal, and there, in the sight of the Lazian army, the murderers of the king were beheaded. But commissions of this nature call for men superior to corruption, of which, indeed, the number is miserably thinned by the weak and prostrate condition of the senate.

How! said Tiberius, are you a zealot for that despotic order, those enemies of civil liberty, men of boundless arrogance in power, submissive to usurpation, and ever ready to enslave or be enslaved?

WHEN I bemoan the want of a senate, replied Belisarius, I do not regret what it was; I regret what it might have been. There is in every government a tendency to arbitrary pow-



er: for it is perhaps natural to man to set up his own will as a law to others. By their rigid behaviour, their inflexible pride, and domineering arrogance, the senate made their administration odious; and mankind, harrassed out, began to conceive hopes that the government of one might prove more mild and equitable; they preferred it, therefore, to the tyranny of the few. The sovereign, thus established, grew jealously fond of the sole authority, and upon the ruins of the senate he was determined to build up his prerogative. As he advanced in his encroachment, a panic seized the senate, and the whole order crouched at once with a meanness that exceeded even the wishes of the new master: even Tiberius blushed for their servility†. But it is easy to conceive, that the senate, when it lost the power of doing evil, might still retain that of rendering service to the public; that it might give to government an air of constitutional authority; and being an intermediate order between the sovereign and the people, might connect and strengthen the whole force of the community. And yet it is not in this view that I regard the senate. I consider it as a seminary of statesmen and of heroes, where at all times might be found a set of great and eminent characters, used alike to the sword and to

† Tacit. Ann. lib. 1.

the scales of justice, distinguished both in council and the field, and fully instructed how to give support to government by salutary laws and military force. It is from that nursery of men, all trained to truth, to knowledge, and to virtue, that the sovereign would be always able to select his ministers, his generals, his governors, and his officers of every sort. Let there be occasion now for a man of principle, wisdom, and ability; where is he to be found? How is he to be known? Where has he distinguished himself? Must the fate of a whole people be risked before he can have a decided character? Can a Regulus, a Fabius, or a Scipio, be formed by the new institution of an imperial militia to do duty about the palace \*? Instead of a public career of emulation, where the soldiery is enured to the exercise of arms, where talents enter the lists, where virtue is called forth into open day-light, where the characters of men display themselves to the world, and the powers of genius are unfolded, and abilities press forward in the race of glory; instead of this bright school of honour, all generous contention is suppressed, and employments of dignity, that should be the reward of merit only, are now

\* This new-fangled order consisted of the officers of the revenue and the civil magistrate. The senate was merged in it by the policy of the emperors.

given as a compliment to the accidental circumstances of birth, or partially dealt out by the hand of court favour. From this source spring all the evils, which, like a torrent, threaten to overwhelm the state.

WHAT would you advise, said the emperor? When men have degenerated into vice and profligacy: when the whole race is degraded, and after painful endeavours to appoint for the best, nothing great or good can be separated from the general mass of the times; judgment then may be weary of deliberating, and he who finds that he chuses only to err, may reasonably desire to wave the fatigue of thinking to no purpose.

BELISARIUS replied, you make too hasty a conclusion; a sovereign may be frequently disappointed in his choice, but he should not be discouraged in his attempt. There will always some honest men be found; and if not, some means may be found to make them so, if the prince be found to be a lover of virtue, and a man of penetration. I must now take my leave of you for this time; the next time we meet I will discuss this topic more largely, and to your satisfaction.

JUSTINIAN seemed something discomposed at this. Does he consider that men may put on false appearances? said he to Tiberius; and



to imagine that men can be made such as you would have them to be, is a proposition I cannot well conceive. However, Belisarius from his years, observations, and misfortunes, can see farther than we imagine; and it will not be lost time to attend to his counsels and instruction.



## C H A P. XIII.

THE next day they found Belisarius in his garden, who welcomed them to a lecture from his gardener. Nothing, said he, bears so near a resemblance to political oeconomy as the proper management of plants. Solon could not reason more strongly than Paulinus my gardener does.

As the hero and the emperor were taking a turn together, Tiberius mentioned to him the different reflexions they had made upon what he advanced the last time they had the pleasure of conversing together, and that they imagined he was wrong in his last proposition.

BELISARIUS replied, it is certainly an undoubted truth, that a prince, always surrounded by a croud of courtiers and flatterers, will have but very little knowledge of mankind. Would he be properly informed, he must apply

to the honest farmer, or the old weather-beaten soldier; they will give him the sentiments of the people; for the truth will always be disguised by his slaves and flatterers. The voice of the people is an oracle, that will always discern and pronounce what sort of men are proper servants for the state; and they seldom fail of pronouncing a right sentence. The sovereign's thoughts ought to be employed in considering who are most proper to be counsellors of the state, and those who are to carry their plans into execution. When the first are honest, the last seldom fail of putting their well concerted plans into execution. The whole depends upon having near his person men worthy of their station. Theodoric had but one faithful adviser, the virtuous Cassiodorus, and the glory of his reign is known to the universe. I will take upon me to say, that even at court there are not wanting infallible criterions of honour and fidelity. Severity of manners, disinterested conduct, the honest firmness of truth, a generous ardour in the cause of innocence, unshaken constancy in friendship, a zeal for virtue that never veers about with the gales of fortune, and a reverence for the laws; these are the features of character by which a prince may know how to distinguish among men, and to determine his choice. Would you know the to-

kens which should make him proscribe men from his presence? They are more legible and certain than the former; for virtue may be counterfeit, but the character of vice is seldom acted. As soon as it appears, you may believe it genuine. For example, If I were a king, the man who once should dare to talk with contempt of my people, with levity of the duties of my station, or should attempt to varnish with flattery the abuse of my prerogative, that man should never rank in the list of my friends. Moreover, to an observant eye, that marks the ways of the world, there are never wanting certain traces of character, which, through the veil of dissimulation, betray the habitual sentiment, and develope the inward man. I have heard much of the profound imposture of courtiers: but imposture is as well known as candour itself; and should the sovereign be imposed upon, the public voice will undeceive him. Let him therefore give his esteem and confidence to the worthy, and he will be sure to be properly informed in every deliberation: for truth and virtue will then sit at his council-board.

BUT do you consider, said the emperor, what a number of the good and virtuous he will have occasion for, that the free course of justice and the dignity of his reign may be supported in



their vigour? Where is he to find the men to complete so honourable a list?

HUMAN nature, replied Belisarius, will always supply him. Let sovereigns know how to use them, and she will never be defective.— And to direct that use, said Justinian, can there be a better rule than that of wholesome and salutary laws?— That will go a great way, replied Belisarius; but it is not all: the manners are not, in many instances, within the controul of law.

AND how then, said Justinian, are inveterate habits, to which time has given a kind of prescription, to be effectually changed?

My gardener will inform you, replied Belisarius. Here, Paulinus; When a noxious herb shoots up among your plants, what do you do?— I take it up by the root, answered the honest gardener.— But why, instead of weeding, it do not you lop it?— Why, it would sprout again, and there would be no end of the trouble: and besides, good sir, it is at the root it sucks in the juices of the earth, and that it is our business to prevent.— You hear him, my friends, said Belisarius; he has given you an abridgment of the law. The law, it is true, retrenches, as far as it is able, the crimes of society; but the vices that give birth to those crimes are suffered to remain, whereas they ought to be weed-

ed and torn up by the root. Nor is that an impracticable scheme: for all vices, at least those of the court, have one common root, and grow out of the same seed.—And what is that pray, said Tiberius?—Inordinate desire, replied Belisarius: and whether that desire be understood to import avarice, that loves to hoard, or rapacity, that delights in squandering; there is nothing sordid and unworthy but what springs from that source. Inhumanity, fraud, treachery, ingratitude, envy, malice, and all the vices that make the gradation to the highest iniquity, are modes of the same depravity of heart, that breaks out in every species of meanness and of pride. It goes on in a course of depredation upon mankind, and with the spoils of the weak pampers itself in riot, voluptuous enjoyment, and every sort of profligacy and corruption. Thus the love of riches infects the whole system of the manners. Does it kindle ambition? Perfidy and fraud are mingled with what otherwise might be a noble passion. Is courage ever grafted upon covetousness? From the stock on which it grows, even courage shall derive the pernicious qualities that debase it into a vice. The most brilliant talents are by avarice tinged with the stain of venality; and the soul, which is enslaved by it, is for ever set up to auction, to be bought by the highest bidder.

FROM this source, this fatal desire of amassing wealth, spring all the crimes that disturb the community. Of this vice, whose tyranny afflicts the universe Luxury is the parent; for, to make its genealogy clear, Luxury engenders various wants: by these Avarice is begot; and Avarice, to gratify her purposes, is obliged to league with Oppression. From hence it is clear, that to lay the axe to the root of the mischief, we must begin with Luxury: there must commence the grand revolution in the manners.

BUT that, said the emperor, will be to wage war with an hydra; one head is struck off, and thousands grow in its room. To use a comparison more analogous; Luxury is a Proteus, which is never to be chained, but eludes the touch in different shapes. I will go farther, said the emperor: the causes and the effects of Luxury, its connexions and its interests, form a system so compounded of good and evil, that, were it possible to restrain or to destroy it, I should much doubt whether the former would be endured, or the latter prove in the end an advantage to the state.

I GRANT you, replied Belisarius, that luxury in the state is like a set of wicked and evil men who have entrenched themselves in great connexions: measures are kept with them in the beginning on account of their party; but



in the end they are ordered into confinement, as enemies of the state. I shall not, however, go so far. Let us set out with facts, which I myself have seen. Luxury, it has been said, is of use in capital cities. I do not believe the position; but, be that as it may, in a camp I am sure it is pernicious. When Pompey observed the soldiers of Cæsar living upon roots that grew wildly in the fields, *They are*, said he, *an herd of brute beasts*; he should have said, *They are men*. The primary quality of a general is to hazard his life; the second, to circumscribe his passions and his wants within the bounds of reason and of nature; and this last, to the man enervated by voluptuous indolence, will be a task of the most difficult self-denial. The people that shall endeavour, amidst the rough scenes of war, to enjoy the softer delicacies of peace, will strive to reconcile two things wholly incompatible, and will neither be able to bear prosperity nor the reverses of fortune. To be victorious will not answer their purpose; they must riot in abundance; and should that happen not to be the consequence, even victory will lose its charms. The camp where frugality and sober manners prevail, will be full of spirit and manly vigour; it will be, as I may say, on the wing; while the army which is dissolved in luxury grows sluggish, dastardly, and inac-

rive. By temperance all the advantages of inward strength and outward resource are managed and secured; and, on the other hand, they are all thrown away by prodigality, till at length desolation, famine, pale dismay, and shameful flight, conclude the war with infamy and disgrace. To the people softened by effeminacy, every enterprize appears above their strength: the principle of valour may remain, but the power of executing is gone; and the enemy that knows how to harass and fatigue need not endeavour to vanquish: the delays of war will have the efficacy of so many battles.

NOR does the whole mischief of luxury consist in wasting the vigour of the body; it strikes corruption to the very soul. The man of wealth and affluence, who leads pleasure and luxury in his train, diffuses a contagion through the camp; and the soldier of fortune, ashamed to be outdone by his equal in the army, becomes his competitor in profligacy, and for a shew of vain glory, incurs real dishonour. To riches and splendor of appearance esteem is offered up as a tribute, while poverty falls into contempt, and sober virtue is abashed by ridicule: then farewell to all; there can be no deeper perdition. This, my friends, is not a fictitious account of luxury; it is the history of what I have seen.

I KNOW full well, said Tiberius, that you banished it from your armies: pray inform me how was that accomplished?—Without any kind of difficulty, replied Belisarius: I cashiered it from my own tent, and made it appear throughout the ranks in a contemptible light. Against the venom of pride contempt is a powerful antidote! I had learned that a young Asiatic had ushered into my camp the soft indulgences of his native clime; that he reposed himself under a purple pavilion, and drank out of golden goblets; that his table smoked with the rarest dishes, and sparkled with the most exquisite wines. I invited him to dine with me, and in the presence of his comrades, Young man, said I, you see we live here upon homely fare; we are often worse served, and it is what we have to expect; for in the race of glory it is our lot very often to want bread. Your delicacy, take my word for it, will meet frequent disappointments in this hardy course of life, and therefore I would advise you to take your leave of the army. He received this reproach with due sensibility, made an apology for his conduct, and discharged his retinue.—And was that admonition sufficient? interposed Tiberius.—Without doubt it was, replied Belisarius; for my own example gave weight to my precepts; and, besides, the character of irresolu-



tion never belonged to me.—But surely this severity of life must have occasioned great complaints!—When the law is equal and expedient, it is obeyed without murmuring.—Very true; but to be humbled to the level of the poor must have been an hardship upon the rich man.—That may possibly be the case; but to counter-balance that inconvenience, it was agreeable to the poor man to see the rich undistinguished; and the poor in all quarters of the world are the greatest party.—Yes; but in courts the rich have the strongest influence.—They have so, and they revenged themselves by my ruin: and yet, far from repenting, I should act in the very same manner again; for the vigour of the soul, like that of the body, is the result of temperance. Without temperance, there is nothing generous and disinterested; and without disinterestedness, not a single virtue. I enquired of a shepherd one day why his dogs were so faithful: Because, said he, they live on bread. Had they been nourished with flesh, they would be no better than wolves. I was much struck with this reply. In general, the surest way to controul the progress of vice, is to retrench the wants occasioned by evil habits.—All this is practicable in an army, said the emperor, but merely visionary, nay impossible, in a state. Between civil institutions, and military law:

there is a wide difference: by the latter, liberty is much abridged, and fettered with strict limitations. No law whatever restrains a member of society from enriching himself by fair and honest means; and when wealth is acquired, no law can divest him of the right of disposing of it, or prevent a quiet enjoyment of his property. It is the fruit of his industry, his labour, and his talents, or it was transmitted to him by his ancestors. He is at liberty to dissipate, or to gratify his avarice by concealing his treasure.—I subscribe to what you say, said Belisarius.—I go still further, continued the emperor: if the riches of the community are engrossed by a particular class of men, it is fit that they should be diffused, and that labour and industry should derive their share from the hand of idleness.—I concur with you in that also, said the hero.—I will add, resumed Justinian, that sensuality, ostentation, splendour of appearance, the caprices of taste, the coquetry of fashion, the refinements of effeminacy, and the whims of vanity, are all little blemishes in the manners, which the policy of every state connives at, and of which, without a degree of tyranny, no law can take cognizance—Heaven forbid, said Belisarius, that I should desire to bring down the weight of law upon matters of this sort!—Now then

you see, continued the emperor, that luxury stands protected by all that is held sacred and inviolable amongst men, by Liberty, by the rights of property, and, I may add, public utility.—I agree to all, said Belisarius, except that last point.—To clear that from objections, said the prince, you will allow that luxury animates the arts, and bids them thrive and flourish; that it encourages industry, and excites a spirit of activity and emulation, offering to the habit of indolence and the love of idleness new incentives of desire, artificial wants, and studied gratifications.

I ALLOW, said Belisarius, that luxury, for those who have been addicted to it, has its allurements; and that it is profitable to the men who study to heighten those allurements, and gratify desire: that the law should leave that commerce free and open, I likewise admit. Is not this what you contend for?

I CONTEND for something further, replied the emperor: I maintain, that the influence of luxury, by progressive degrees, diffuses itself through every class of the community, even down to those who work and labour. It is beneficial to them, for it opens a vent for their commodities, and yields a quick return for their industry.

IT is upon this point, said Belisarius, that



appearances mislead you: for that which comes to the share of the labouring man from the hand of prodigality, only reverts back to the original owner: it was first taken from him by avarice; and if it return to him, it is because luxury cannot prevent it. Recal to mind the idea which I formerly suggested, of the primitive state of society: what is the end it has in view? Is it not to render man useful to man? And in that system, is not the right which one man has to the labours of another, founded on reciprocal conditions? If so, what must be said of him, who employs thousands to answer the multiplicity of his wants, without contributing on his part to the service of others? He is like a sterile and pernicious herb that grows to feed in a field of wheat. Such is the rich man who loiters his days in idleness and luxury. For him the busy part of society are at work; and with a cold disregard he receives the products of their labour, as a tribute due to him. To supply his desire, and administer to his pleasures, seems the employment of all nature; the elements, the most exquisite viands, the arts, and the choicest efforts of invention, are all his. He partakes of all, and is uncondusive himself to any useful end: he engrosses from the public service a number of hands for his own purposes. He does the du-

ty of none, and dies at last without leaving any void, but that of the good things he has consumed.

I AM not clear as to this point, said Tiberius; for it seems to me that he is not altogether so great an incumbrance as you imagine. For if he does not throw the fruits of his own talents into the general fund; if he does not impart to the public, his own activity and powers; yet he circulates his money, and that does full as well.

HOLD, my young friend, said Belisarius; money is a mere symbol of valuation, a general standard denoting the worth of the thing we receive, and a pledge for the return of it. It answers the purposes of mutual commerce, and gives facility to the traffic between man and man: but he, who in the course of that traffic gives only the symbol, and never parts with the reality, breaks the true law of commutation, in order to possess himself of that for which he never pays in kind. The pawn which he deposits, dispenses with the contract, instead of binding it closer. Let the magistrate keep painful vigils for the public safety; let the soldier fight the battles of his country; and let the husbandman and artificer work incessantly; the right of the rich man to their joint

services, is annually renewed, and his privilege to be insignificant, is stamped upon his gold.

IN this manner, said Tiberius, the world is hired in the service of opulence.—It is so, my young friend, continued Belisarius; and the rich man is at no other trouble than that of paying in the detail to the whole community, the wages of their servitude.—But should there be such a state of servitude? enquired Tiberius. Why should any government endure these men of overgrown opulence?—Because, replied the hero, the law secures to every individual the possession of the property he has acquired; and nothing can be so justly acquired, as the fruit of labour, industry, and knowledge. With the liberty of acquiring, the right of possessing, is naturally connected; and property, as well as liberty, is a civil right not to be violated.\* It is, without doubt, an evil, that the opulent should have it in their power to throw the whole load of their own existence, and that of their

\* A philosopher at Athens having found a treasure that had been deposited in his ground, wrote to the emperor Trajan, *I have found a treasure.* The emperor answered him, that he had nothing to do but to enjoy it. The other replied, *It is too much for a philosopher to use.* Then make a wrong use of it, said the emperor. Alexander Severus was of the same opinion.



train, upon the community; but it would be a more crying evil, were the principles of emulation suppressed, and industry divested of a secure title to its possessions. Let us therefore not complain of incurable evils. As long as there are degrees of activity, industry, and oeconomy, there will also be degrees of happiness and inequality in the conditions of mankind. The more flourishing the state, the more striking will that inequality be; and yet to level those conditions, is a power that no legislature will usurp.

LET us avow then, said the emperor, that luxury has its use; for it tends, by its wants and its expences, to compound with the public for the very inequality complained of. In other words, luxury exhausts its own riches, and bids them flow among the people.—I acknowledge it, replied Belisarius, riches should have as many vents as possible through which to diffuse themselves abroad. I do not mean to argue, that the man of affluence should be obliged to hoard his riches, or that any rule of policy should prescribe the use to be made of them. The law, I have already said, should content itself with charging the public with the necessities of government: Farther than this it should not go; the rest of every man's acquisition should be left unexercised, in such man-

ner that the state should draw its necessary supplies from the superfluity of its subjects. Opinion will do the rest.—Opinion! said the emperor—Yes, opinion, replied Belisarius: that and that only, without constraint and violence, will arrange all things in their proper order; and it is thence alone that we are to expect a revolution in the manners.

A revolution of this sort appears difficult to you; but it depends entirely upon the will and the example of the sovereign. Let him be equal and impartial to merit; let the man of modest reserve and simplicity of manners be sure of the best reception at court; let the prince proclaim his contempt of ostentatious expence, and emasculating luxuries; let him behold with an eye of disdain the slaves of luxury; let him view with regards of cheerfulness and respect, the men who labour for the public good, and the court will soon take the tone of simple manners, ennobled by wisdom and frugality. Ostentation will no longer be honourable, it will not even be decent. A becoming austerity of life will take the place of licentiousness; every thing frivolous will give way to wisdom; personal merit will be the best letter of recommendation, and pomp and vanity will be left to the empty pleasures of self-applause. Oh! my friends! how rapid would be their fall! You

know how docile and imitative the metropolis is; how easy to be moulded to the example of the court! That which grows into esteem is soon in fashion. The good old frugality once restored disinterestedness would follow, and bring in her train heroic manners. The man of ability to be useful, perceiving inordinate desires no longer in vogue, and freed from the debasing wants of luxury, would soon find the sentiments of honour taking root in his heart; the love of his country, and an ardour for glory would warm the breast of freedom, and emulation would kindle up its generous flame. Alas! did the sovereign know his ascendant over the minds of men, with what facility he can mould them to his will, he would enjoy it as his sweetest power, his best and most respectable prerogative; and yet it is the only regal attribute of which he is entirely ignorant.

By what influence, said Justinian, shall the sovereign be able to controul a taste for amusement, the love of pleasure, and the lust of money? Of what consequence is it to him, whose every sense is intoxicated with voluptuousness, whether the court approves or censures his conduct? Will the prince be able to restrain the man, whose power of wealth is great, from making his own use of the industrious? Can he hinder him from being encompassed



with delights? from making the arts subservient to his gratifications? No, replied Belisarius; But if it be agreeable to the sovereign, he can brand effeminacy with shame, and indolence with contempt: he can exclude dissipation, vice, and incapacity, however wealthy, from the first offices of the state. It will depend upon him to make the true comforts of life and every rational enjoyment the sure attendants of a good and respectable character; he can give them to merit, and he can, moreover, take from luxury all its pride and ostentation, till it feels itself the object of contempt. This will almost compleat the work: for when luxury is thus reduced, honesty will no longer be depressed, nor will virtue suffer indignity. There will be other rewards, of which riches can never be the substitute. The esteem of the public, dignities, and honours will be the price of merit. Gold will not be able to cover over shame and infamy, and the little spirit will flutter in vain pomp and splendid ornament. Believe me, my good friends, take pride from luxury, and you disarm it. All its refined sensations are affected; it subsists entirely upon the opinion mankind entertains of its gaiety and happiness. Subdue that opinion, and you reduce riches to their true standard. If they aspire to honour and real value, they must be

ennobled by the use made of them. It is impossible for luxury to be generous; avarice grows upon its wants; and that very avarice is compounded of all the passions that are usually hired for money. But if the most ardent passions, such as pride, ambition, and love itself, (for love always is in the train of pomp and vain glory) are no longer attached to magnificence and ostentation, you may then compute how the estimate of luxury is diminished, and avarice loses of its force.

THE real advantages of wealth, such as convenience, accommodation, the delights of affluence, quiet, independance, and that superiority which fortune claims over those who are retained in its service; all these are more than sufficient to strike a deep impression upon little minds; insomuch that I am far from hoping or fearing the downfal of arts, which have luxury for their support.

BUT let distinctions and honours be once disjoined from wealth, and then the souls which nature has endowed with energy and spirit, with exalted virtues and generous passions, will look down with disdain upon the petty enjoyments of vanity, and will seek elsewhere the rewards of fame and honour.

THE glare of affluence, said Tiberius, will never be eclipsed in an opulent and flourish-

ing state by the frugal system of barren and unprofitable honours. The eyes of mankind are dazzled by the lustre of wealth; and dignities, nay majesty itself, are obliged to borrow thence their most striking decorations.

I SHOULD be glad to know, replied Belisarius, of two eminent men, which, according to your ideas, gave the greatest dignity and even majesty to the Roman senate, the rich Lucullus or the indigent Cato? The question quite overpowered Tiberius. I allude now, continued the hero, to an æra of luxury; and yet in that very period, with what veneration did the sound uncorrupted part of the commonwealth (I mean the people) recal to their minds the days of ancient simplicity, when Rome was free, virtuous, and poor; when the lands of her scanty territory were tilled by the conqueror's hand, and the plough was crowned with triumphant laurel? Let us do justice to the people, and rest assured that a wise sovereign, incircled with warriors and with patriots void of arrogance, but full of years and honours, will exhibit to his people a more respectable and honourable scene, than a prince dissolved in luxury and surrounded by a train of glittering vassals. It is a maxim ever inculcated by persons in high offices, that to strike the public with ideas of dignity, their rank ought ever to be a-



dorned with pomp and magnificence. They are generally both superinduced; but they resemble a coat, whose amplitude serves to cover the defects of the body; and this furnishes us with an additional reason why the whole wardrobe of outward shew and splendor, which thus disguises men and confounds the judgment, should be totally thrown aside. When Virtue displays itself to the public eye, like a wrestler in the amphitheatre, her form and vigour will be better distinguished; and if Vice, Incapacity, and Meanness, ever presume to enter the lists, they will stand more confessed to view, and will the sooner be covered with confusion.

It is another advantage resulting from simple manners in eminent stations, that the burden of rewarding merit is made lighter to the public, and the state makes a saving of expences, that would be rendered ruinous by the insatiable rapacity of ambition. A sensible distribution of honours will dispense with the necessity of magnificent presents; and frugality even in the grant of honours, will make the prince still a better oeconomist for the public good. That is the great end he should have in view. To restrain the rich from launching into a profusion of expence is not the point; prodigality is a fire that soon consumes the materials it subsists upon. The prime object is, to preserve

the men, who, unprovided with every thing but their talents, their knowledge, and their virtues, may be inclined to consecrate themselves to the service of their country, from being tainted by the sweets of luxury, and corrupted by the lust of gold. The brightest distinctions, such as are never prophaned by sordid mis-applications, should be reserved for persons of their temper and genius. I can say of myself, that I served my prince with all due zeal, and with considerable success; and my own feelings inform me how vile a thing is gold when compared with the oaken branch and the laurel, those sweet remembrancers of the sovereign's affection and esteem. Moreover that esteem, which is so grateful to the honest heart, especially when seconded by the voice of public approbation, the prince will do well to reserve for actions of real worth and utility, taking care, with a calm dignity of resolution, never to prostitute them for undertakings, vain in their nature, frivolous or dangerous. That will be his true frugality. To maintain this properly, it will indeed demand a firm unshaken constancy of mind; a spirit of justice always on its guard against seduction or surprize; a determination of the will that never fluctuates, but checks even a rising hope that it will soften into compliance. This great and dignified cha-

rafter will be acquired, nay it will be supported, if a real love of virtue animate the sovereign's breast. In that case, his opinion will be the opinion of the public, and his example will decide and fix the national character.

SHALL I fairly own, said Tiberius, a difficulty that remains with me? At the rate you have gone on, the court, from whence the royal favour, intrigue, and luxury, are discarded, will grow rather serious and gloomy; and possibly then a young prince—Oh! I understand you; that the prince may want amusement is your fear; but, my dear friend, I have not said that the task of governing is a mere pastime. And yet, even amidst the solitudes of royalty, there may be many hours of the sweetest enjoyment. The minister, for instance, may report to him the progress of agriculture in places and provinces, which before were melancholy scenes of idleness, poverty, and distress: May he not then say to himself, An act of my will has now made millions happy? His sages of justice may inform him, that by one of his laws the inheritance of an orphan has been wrested from the griping hand of hard-hearted avarice: May he not say with exultation, Heaven be praised! I have been the protector of the poor. From the war-office he will not receive consolations of so pure and unmixed a nature. But when



he is told with what zeal and generous ardour  
 his faithful subjects shed their blood in the cause  
 of their sovereign and their country, regret and  
 pity will so compound themselves in mixed sen-  
 sations of love, tenderness, and gratitude, that  
 the tears of humanity will delight him. In short,  
 the vows and prayers of his own illustrious æra,  
 and the blessings of future ages, which the con-  
 scious imagination will anticipate, all crowd to-  
 gether in his breast, and are the solid pleasures  
 of a sovereign. And will not these suffice?  
 Will there be still a void left aching in his bo-  
 som? Like the kings of Persia, in ancient times,  
 he may visit the provinces of his empire, distin-  
 guishing with his favours those who promote  
 industry and agriculture, plenty and populati-  
 on; while pride, inhumanity, and indolence, for  
 working the contrary mischiefs, will be sure to  
 meet the marks of his displeasure. At Byzan-  
 tium, as well as at Rome, the public granaries  
 have been visited by the emperors; would it be  
 a degrading condescension, if they made a pro-  
 gress into the country, to know with certainty  
 that under the lowly roof of the peasant bread  
 has not been wanting for his helpless children?  
 Alas! how uninstructed must that prince be in  
 regard to his duty and his interest, who suffers  
 a vacuity in his time! We must not imagine that  
 a prince, in his moments of tranquillity, when

he is detached from the cause and duties of his rank, is to remain a stranger to the sweet sensations of domestic happiness and social pleasure. He will have his select friends; and unbending himself with them, he will taste the charm of rational delight. The man of virtue, who wants little, and is therefore easily contented, displays in his conversation that serenity of sober joy, which springs from peace and inward harmony; that heartfelt ease, to which pride importuned by craving wants, and vice for ever suffering the corrosions of remorse, are utter strangers. An honest mind, it must be acknowledged, will find but little leisure to relax itself from the duties of an important office; but the moments of vacation will be delightful. Remorse, ambition, and fear, are banished from the hallowed hour. The court where uprightness, truth, and virtue may walk secure, without fearing envy, that lies in ambush, and without apprehending sudden disgrace from the whim of the prince, will not, perhaps, be the most brilliant court, but it will be the happiest in the world.—It will not be crowded, said the emperor.—And why not, resumed Belisarius? The little ambitious fry, that love to shine in ease and splendid vanity will not flutter in the circle; but to recompense that loss, men of probity and of useful talents

will form a numerous party. I say numerous, my friend Tiberius, and I say it in honour of human nature. When virtue is in fashion, the seeds of it will be disclosed in every heart. Public estimation is a kind of sun in the moral world, that warms, that animates, and calls forth the latent principles of truth and honour. When the soul is sunk in sloth and languor, it is not then the time to delineate its true character. Is it to be expected that a young man, who has heard nothing from his father but the panegyrick of money; whose imagination has been dazzled with the lustre of gold; who in cities and in villages has seen nothing so abject and despised as labour and industry; who has been taught by experience that pride can creep, that ambition will crouch, that law will bend, the road to honours be thrown open, and court-favour dispense its smiles at the beck and command of riches; that they, and they only, can protect him from injustice, or exercise the severest tyranny; that they adorn and embellish vice, ennoble meanness, and supersede talents, ability, and virtue; is it to be expected, I say, that a young man educated in this train of thinking should be able to draw the line between good and evil, virtue and self-interest? Let a different doctrine prevail; let the sovereign, that fountain of the manners, set the fashion of the



heart; let education and habits of virtue teach the value, the necessity of self-approbation; let them awaken the love of honest fame, and a desire to win the applause of good men; let the soul expatiate abroad to gather the suffrages of the present age, and to forestal the praise of future times; let fair renown be next to virtue the highest and greatest good; let zeal for the moral character make honour dearer than life, and shame more dreadful than even annihilation; let these principles be once established, and it will soon be found how feeble is the influence of sordid views and mean desires. Oh! my good friends! where would now be the names of Decius, Regulus, and the Cato's, had they not been souls of fire, inspired by honour, and replete with virtue? To excite an emulation of their example, there must be an institution founded in wisdom, and real encouragement to make men run the bright career of glory. It were vain and idle to require of the fathers of families, that they should train up their children in the paths of virtue, if that very virtue be left to languish under disgrace, and bear the spurns of triumphant vice. To re-establish order, and give the manners the strength and beauty of system, all that is good in life must be appropriated to virtue; evil should be the portion of iniquity, and every ad-

vantage assigned to justice and to honour. Let government proceed thus systematically, and it will readily strike your observation how the manners will second the laws, and gain strength and enforcement from the popular opinion. Hopes and fears, rewards and punishments, dignities and disgrace, those are the engines that policy should set in motion on the side of virtue and civil liberty; by managing these properly the world may be governed at discretion.

BUT to keep more closely to the point; by proud and ostentatious manners the great are rendered insolent and avaricious; from simple manners spring the opposite qualities of moderation, justice, and humanity; and thus the leading interests of vice being lifted on the side of virtue, men will adopt the latter with the same spirit that attached them to the former.

You have given us a pleasing reverie, said Justinian, an agreeable and flattering dream!—Far from it, replied Belisarius; to think of making interest and self-love the springs of human actions, is by no means a dream. Call to mind by what methods was formed, in the infancy of the republic, that glorious senatorial order, in which so many ardent virtues, such heroic patriotism blazed forth upon the world. To what, think you, was it owing? It was because there was nothing at Rome superior to

greatness of soul; \* it was because public veneration was attached to virtuous manners, and glory was the hero's sure reward. Such, in all periods of the world, have been the great springs and movers of the human heart.

I AM not now to learn that inveterate habits, and particularly the habits of despotic pride, give way unwillingly to the most powerful motives. But let it be observed, that for one son of profligacy and corruption, who would hold out with obstinacy, in spite of shame, disgrace, and infamy, there are a thousand who would yield at once to the controul of reason, and having glory for their excitement, would walk contentedly in the paths of honour and of virtue. Let me pursue the consequences of this idea. I suppose that men of virtue are placed at the helm of government. I will, in that case, answer with my life for the prompt obedience, the fidelity, and the public spirit of a people; who are no longer bent under the yoke of oppression, but, instead of being harrassed by little tyrants, find their lives, their property, and their liberty, secure under the protection of the laws. The state then begins to raise its head; concord prevails through all classes of the community; the plan of Constantine, built on a fan-

\* The Roman empire was increased by encouraging merit, wherever it was found. Liv. lib. 4.



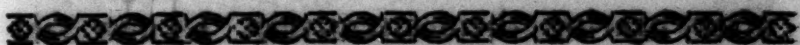
dy bottom, lays a deeper foundation; and from civil union I see spring up emulation, fortitude, zeal for the public good, and with these that weight among the nations which made Rome the mistress of the world.

JUSTINIAN was absorbed in thought while Belisarius talked in this manner, and beheld with wonder the becoming ardor with which the old hero expressed himself, forgetting all his former misfortunes, and exalted in thoughts of making his country flourishing and happy. What a generous soul is this! replied the emperor, that the old man should possess such sentiments for those who have used him so barbarously. Belisarius replied, it would be the most glorious sound that ever saluted my ears, if I was told, "You are now to endure the most wretched torments; but those torments will accomplish your most sanguine hopes of recovering the state from the condition it now is in to a flourishing and happy condition."

THE virtuous Eudoxa came to inform him that his supper was ready. He went in; his daughter, with a graceful and modest air, served up a plate of pulse for her father, and joined with him in the frugal repast. The emperor asked him if that was his supper? To which Belisarius replied, Fabricius was my equal, and what is now my frugal supper was his also.

A SIGHT like this, said Justinian to Tiberius, covers me with shame and confusion, pray let us depart.

THE court, in hopes of relieving the mind of the emperor from the uneasiness that they imagined he was under, prepared a scene of festivity, at which he would not condescend to be present, but retired to a private supper, his thoughts being wholly taken up with the happiness of Belisarius's mind, though to the world he appeared to be overwhelmed with misfortunes.



C H A P. XIV.

NEXT morning the emperor called on Tiberius. In their way to the hero's asylum, he said, I am always dead but when I am in his company. His serenity and composure of mind infuses itself into my mind, and I am always happy in his presence. But he is like the sun, when withdrawn from his company, my mind is a gloomy darkness, a mere chaos. The difficulties for redress of grievance appear nothing when he is talking upon them, but appear unsurmountable when I think of them myself. In the first place, the hero talks of making every

burden lighter, to the poor, notwithstanding the empire is overloaded with expences. His plan for new modelling the army, well nigh annihilated by a twenty years' war!—and reducing a multiplicity of taxes to one general tax, simple and light.—Tiberius made answer, I make no doubt, but what he has seen the subject in all the different points in view; only inform him of the difficulties that have occurred to you, and I dare say he will remove them all.

THE conversation was accordingly opened with a state of the emperor's reasonings; and after hearing them attentively, I knew, said Belisarius, that I should start in your mind a number of doubts; but I flatter myself I shall be able to remove them all.

THE expences of the court, according to my plan, are now reduced. We have banished luxury and favouritism. Let us now take a view of the metropolis; and pray tell me the reason why such a swarm of inhabitants, lazy, indolent, and almost without number, should be a burden to the state? The corn which is distributed among them, would maintain twenty legions †. It was in order to people

† 40,000 bushels per day: the bushel, *modius*, one foot square, and four inches deep. The Roman foot:



the city, and make it emulate Rome, that Constantine charged himself with this ruinous expence. But by what title can an useless and inactive race pretend a right to be thus maintained at the public charge? The Romans, a people altogether of a military genius, might well claim to be nourished, even in time of profound peace, by the fruits of their conquests; yet in the very height of their splendor and their glory, a portion of land to cultivate was all they required; and that being allotted by the state, it is well known with what eagerness they issued forth to the labours of the field. But with us, what useful end is answered by that ever-craving multitude that besieges the gates of the palace? \* Was it with such men that I expelled the Huns, those ravagers of Thrace? The city should retain only such a number of inhabitants as can find due employment to maintain themselves by their industry; the rest should be sent forth to colonise in different parts of the empire.

was ten of our inches. The allowance of the soldier was five bushels a month, or the sixth of a bushel per day: therefore 40,000 bushels, at six men to a bushel, would maintain 240,000 men.

\* See Prud. lib. 1. in Synn. The Roman pound was ten modern ounces. See Builing. de tributis ac vectingalibus. P. R.

They would increase population, and subsist upon the fruits of their labour. Agriculture is the seminary of soldiers: a good and serviceable militia will never be formed out of a lazy race, who are contented to loiter away their days in idle poverty. Let the laws, and above all, the taxes be reduced to a plan of simplicity; and the militia of the palace will be undone by its own insignificance. What an immense saving may be made by that circumstance need not be mentioned. §.

THE most alarming expence of government is the maintenance of the army. But even that expence will be reduced to the regular body of the legions; for the veterans established in colonies upon the frontiers of the empire, subsist by their own industry, and their immunities and exemptions from all civil offices stand in the nature of pay. \* Those colonies, the master-stroke of Constantine's genius and policy, are not as yet annihilated; to make them revive in all the spirit of their original design, depends upon the will of the prince; for in fact, the number of gallant soldiers, who are now drooping in poverty and indolence, de-

§ See L'Orig. du Gouv. Fr. par M. L'abbé Garnier.

\* Cod. Theod. Lib. 7. Tit. 20.

fire no better reward than to be sent to cultivate and defend the lands they have acquired by conquest. The same may be asserted in regard to the troops which have been settled upon the borders of rivers†. Those places now improved and cultivated, repay with abundance the industry of the labourer.

WHOLE swarms of barbarians have been constantly crowding about our frontiers, in hopes of gaining a settlement ¶ in our provinces; and occasionally they have been admitted, without sufficient precaution\*; but the danger consisted in admitting too large a number. Let foreign settlers, therefore, not be embodied together, but dispersed in distant places, and let the waste and uncultivated lands be allotted to them. Of these we have, alas! too many! ‡ but a vigilant and active government would soon naturalize the foreign intruders, and

† They were called *ripenfes*. Alexander Severus first established them. See Lamprid. in Alexander.

¶ These settlers were called *Leti*, and their lands, *Letic* farms.

\* As the Goths under the emperor Valent.

‡ The lands of the *Fiscus*, or Treasury, were immense. The punishment of most offences was a confiscation of property. See L'Abbe Garn. de l'Origine du Gouv. Fr.



incorporate them with the rest of the state as useful citizens, and well affected soldiers.

THE legions, therefore, are now the only remaining burthen to the state; and the tribute which we draw from Egypt, from Afric, and Sicily, would well support three times the number the government ever had in its service†. It is not respecting this article that parsimony is required, concerning their maintenance\*. The state may be at ease, but it cannot be too strenuous in its endeavours to fix them upon a good and regular establishment. There was a time, when admission into the legions was an honour reserved for the citizens of Rome, † and was warmly disputed by the young men, who were eager candidates for it. That time is now no more, but it should be renewed. And then, what may not be at-

† Sicily paid a tribute to the Romans of 7,200,000 bushels of corn; Egypt, 21,600,000; and Afric, 43,200,000; at the rate of six men to a bushel, there was daily maintenance for 1,200,000 men.

\* The monthly pay of a soldier was 400 asses, value 25 silver denarii, equal to one *numus aureus*. The *assis* was an ounce of copper, the silver denarius weighed one, and the aureus 140 grains.

† This honour was also eagerly disputed by the youth of the provinces, who had the rights of the city.

chieved by men who have both honour and bread!

MEN are no longer the same, said the emperor.—The nature of man is the same, replied Belisarius; and nothing is changed but opinion, that sovereign mistress of the manners. In fact, we only want the soul of one great man, his genius and his example, to expand themselves abroad, and fix the principles and the manners. From a million of instances, that support this proposition, take a single fact, which is, in my estimation, worthy of the old republic in its greatest period, and evinces plainly, that in all ages, the virtue of mankind has displayed itself in proportion to the demand made for it by those who were sufficiently skilled in the powers of human nature.

ROME was taken by Totila. One of our brave officers, whose name was Paul, had sallied out of the city at the head of a small party, and entrenched himself on an eminence, where he was surrounded by the enemy. Famine, it was not doubted, would soon reduce him to the necessity of surrendering; and in fact, he was in want of every thing. In this exigence, he addressed himself to his soldiers: "My friends, said he, we must either perish, "or survive in slavery. You, I know, will

"not hesitate about the choice; but it is not  
 "enough to perish, we must perish nobly. The  
 "coward may resign himself to be consumed  
 "by famine; he may linger in misery, and  
 "wait, in a dispirited condition, for the friend-  
 "ly hand of death. But we who have been  
 "schooled, and educated in the field of battle,  
 "we are not now to learn the proper use of  
 "our arms: we know how to carve for our-  
 "selves an honourable death. Yes, let us die,  
 "but not inglorious and unrevenge'd; let us  
 "die covered with the blood of our enemies,  
 "that our fall, instead of raising the smile of  
 "deliberate malice, may give them cause to  
 "mourn over the victory that undoes us. Can  
 "we wish to loiter a few years more in  
 "life, when we know that a very few must  
 "bring us to our graves? The limits of  
 "human life cannot be enlarged by nature,  
 "but glory can extend them, and give a second  
 "life."

He finished his harangue: the soldiery de-  
 clared their resolution to follow him. They  
 began their march; the intrepid countenance  
 with which they advanced, soon denoted to the  
 enemy a design to give battle with all the cou-  
 rage of the last despair. Without waiting,  
 therefore, to receive the attack of this illustri-  
 ous band, the Goths thought proper to com-



pound, by an immediate grant of life and liberty. \*

I CAN count, my friends, upon at least two millions in the empire, capable of the same magnanimity, if another Paul were at the head of them. We can reckon also some chiefs of this illustrious class; our victories have pointed them out. While such resources remain, let us not despair of the commonwealth. Are you still to be told, to what a degree of prosperity, affluence, and population, the force of the state may be increased? Recal to mind the condition in ancient times, I will not say of Gaul, which we meanly abandoned, † but of Spain, Greece, Italy, the republic of Carthage, and the various realms of Asia from the banks of the Nile to the Euxine shore. Recollect that Romulus §, who in the infancy of the state had but one legion, was able at his death to bequeath to his successor forty-seven thousand men under arms. By that circum-

\* Leonard. Aretin. de Bell. Ital. adversus Gothos.

Lib. 4.

† In order to deliver Rome and Italy from the Goths, the emperor ceded to them the fairest provinces of Gaul. Sidon. Apoll. lib. vii. Ep. vii.

§ The legion at that time consisted of 3000 foot and 300 horse. See Dionys. Halic. and Plutarch's life of Romulus.

stance you will be instructed what may be done by the activity, vigilance, and spirit of a single man. The empire, it is said, is undone. How! are Italy, Sicily, Spain, Lybia, and Ægypt, all exhausted? Are Boeotia, Macedonia, and the plains of Asia, which made the riches of Darius and Alexander, are they grown barren and unproductive? But the numbers of mankind are thinned! Oh, my friends, let social happiness be re-established in those regions, and the progress of population will be rapid: men will be found in plenty, and then, I should have courage to propose the vast plan which I have meditated, and which, perhaps, is the only way to render the empire more powerful and more flourishing than ever.—And what can that plan be, said the emperor?—I will open it to you, replied Belisarius.

THE operations of war, according to our way of conducting it, exceeded the strength of our armies; we were quite exhausted by laborious marches and fatigue of every kind. The diversion of our arms gave the enemy an opportunity to alarm us with sudden incursions, which the line of veterans and of Agrarian soldiers, posted on our borders, was not sufficient to withstand; and in consequence, before the regular legions could come up to their support, devastation and terror without controul

spread a general ravage\*. In order, therefore, to oppose to this torrent a constant fence, I would new model the empire upon a plan of military policy, in such sort that every freeman should be a soldier, but for the purposes only of internal defence. Upon this system, every prefect would have under his command a well-arranged army, of which the cohorts would be formed by the cities, and the legions by the provinces, with proper places appointed for their rendezvous, that they might so act in concert as at the sound of a trumpet, to assemble immediately, and be embodied at the shortest warning.

From an army of this kind would result the further advantage, that every individual would glow with the love of his native soil; that soil which he has helped to people, which his hands have cultivated, and which is endeared to him by the labour he has employed to make:

\* The frontier provinces, in the time of Augustus, did not exceed nine. The legions were established at regular and fixed posts. But the number of provinces afterwards encreasing, the legions became inadequate to the service. Constantine withdrew them to an interior station, and the lines of veterans, to whom lands were allotted on the borders of the enemy, made but a feeble substitute in the room of more regular forces.



it flourishing and fruitful. With these incentives in their bosoms, you may imagine to yourself how ardent they would be in the just defence of their property †.

In an empire of wide extent, there is nothing so difficult as to diffuse through the whole an idea of a common cause, a principle of civil union, and one general interest. Among people separated by the sea, we seldom observe any considerable degree of attachment to one another. The South is wholly indifferent about the dangers that alarm the North. The Dalmatian and the Illyrian march under our banners into Asia with the coldest insensibility: to them it is a matter of no concern whether the Tigris flows under our laws or those of the Persian. By military discipline he is retained in the camp, and from the love of plunder he derives a degree of spirit; but cool reflexion succeeds; by fatigue and labour he is relaxed; and in the first moment of discontent or terror he abandons a cause which is not his own. Upon my plan the very reverse would be the case: the name of country would not be an empty sound to the soldier, but the object of his af-

† Land possessions inspire their cultivators with courage to defend them. The fruit of the soil is the stake which the conqueror proposes to win. Xenoph. on husbandry.

fection, ever dear and present, and twined about his heart by all the tenderest ties of nature. To inflame the soldier with spirit against the enemy, the proper harangue may be thus conceived. "Friends, countrymen, and fellow-citizens! behold the lands which gave you nurture; Lo, the roof under which you drew your first breath! the tomb of your ancestors, the cradle of your infants, and the bed of your wives, whom you are now going to defend."—And are not these powerful and pathetic motives? They have made more heroes than even love and ambition. Of their resistless influence over minds trained up to ideas of war and the rigorous duties of military discipline, you may easily form a judgment.

For my part, I dwell with inexpressible delight on the picture, which even now imagination fondly draws of a laborious, warlike youth, pressing with ardour in all our towns and villages to the standard of their country; a spirited and active race, preserved by labour from the vices of indolence, enured by habit to the rigours of manly exercise, addicted to the useful arts of peace, and eager to take the field upon the first alarm of danger! In a militia so constituted, the crime of desertion would be a crime against nature; \* and their courage and fidelity

\* It is against nature to desert the common good.

ty would be secured to their country by every sacred bond that holds society together. The state would not the less on this account be provided with its regular legions, which would be a moving bulwark, ready to be advanced whenever danger called. By these means a spirit of emulation and a warlike genius would be diffused throughout the empire, and the reward of bravery might be a commission to serve in the regular and more honourable body of the legions, which would be thus recruited; without those rash levies of men, which partiality, fraud, collusion or negligence, insist into the army †. We should then have a muster of the people. How superior would be the force of the empire to any former period of its strength, even though we should look back to the days of its most refulgent glory! § Would the enemy of the South or the North dare, in that case, to invade us? Would they assault a people, who with an undisciplined army, unprovided with the proper instruments of war, and almost without

† Hence the enemies on all sides gave us so many defeats, whilst a long peace selects the soldier without care, whilst the raw soldiers, attentive to their possessions, are approved either through favour or dissimulation, Veget. lib. i. cap. 7.

§ Under Augustus 23 legions; under Tiberius 25; Adrian 30; Galba 372,000 men, half Romans, and the other half auxiliaries.



bread, have so often beat back their irruptions?

AND who can answer, interrupted Justinian, that, in a military state like this, the people will always be under the controul of government? Who will venture to insure a due subordination?—It will be insured, replied Belisarius, by their own interest, by the benignity of the laws, and the moderation, justice, and sagacity, of a wise administration. You will be so good as to bear in your minds, that I made the happiness of the people the very corner-stone of the edifice.—It is very true, said Justinian; but the people are prone to change, fond of innovation, inconstant, restless, and ready to be inflamed by the first factious leader that hopes to find his account in civil commotions.—You see the people in one light only, replied Belisarius; you judge of them in their present condition, a state of suffering, like that in which they were plunged at Rome, \* when Rome had fallen into misfortunes. But of this you may be sure, that men always know their own wants, and will understand their rights: let the prince succour the former, and protect the latter, and you may rely upon it that they will acknow-

\* It is the custom of the common people to hate the present and to commend the past times.—The vulgar of an inconstant temper, seditious, contentious, desirous of novelty, an enemy to peace and quiet. Sallust.

ledge all his patriot cares with gratitude. The sovereign's love will be repaid by the affections of his people. If he prove just, benevolent and wise, confiding the offices of his administration to none but men worthy of seconding the good intentions of a patriot prince, the people on their part will be docile and submissive. By what metamorphosis, I should be glad to know, can a few discontented spirits, a paltry handful of seditious malecontents convert a people, who have reason to be satisfied, into a set of perjured rebels? Such a revolt is only to be dreaded by him who leaves his subjects to groan under oppression: the character of reigning for the good of the community will always be a bulwark against treasons and conspiracies. Can it be imagined, that amidst the applauses sent up to the throne by a grateful people, rebellion will dare to erect its standard? Where is it to seek accomplices? Will it go into scenes of rural tranquillity, where peace, and liberty and plenty, sit smiling on the land? Will it skulk in towns, where industry works in chearfulness, and the fortunes of every citizen, his life, his property, and his rights, are under the safeguard of the laws? Will it cabal in families, where innocence, truth, honour, and the sanctity of marriage-vows co-operate with all the tenderest ties of nature, and endear the domest-

tic scene? Can treason in such places expect to find associates? It will not expect it; for the empire of justice is immoveable, or nothing sub-lunary can have a lasting duration. I will allow you that in making the subject powerful, in order to render him happy and contented, there is a risk that requires a daring mind; but of that daring mind I should be, though my ruin were the consequence: I should speak out and tell my people, I put arms into your hands, to serve and aid me, if my government be just, and to resist usurpation, if I should be guilty of it. This you will deem rashness, but in my idea it is the height of prudence thus to put under due restraint both my own passions and those of the people, thereby establishing a sure barrier against the ill consequences of either. With my crown I should, by these means, transmit to my successor an hereditary necessity to govern according to law; and that necessity, thus rendered descendible, would be the brightest monument of glory that ever monarch left behind him. I am aware, my friends, that genuine virtue does not act upon the principle of fear; but if virtue is entrenched by it, I shall think it a considerable advantage; for what virtue is at all times sure of walking upright? I know it is a maxim that a prince is above the



laws; \* the very law itself asserts it, and perhaps wisely; but my first care should be at my accession to forget that maxim, nor would I forgive the sycophant who should remind me of it. My friends, I now must take my leave. To change the face of things, and new model an empire, is a laborious task: let us repose ourselves a little. To-morrow I shall be glad of your company. There still remains behind another grievance, which afflicts my spirits: but I will reserve it for another opportunity. At our next meeting I shall endeavour to interest Tiberius in regard to the matter I have now only alluded to.

THE emperor on his return back said to Tiberius, his views are very extensive; but what he talks of must be undertaken by one in the prime of life, and not by one in my years, almost worn out with cares, and the infirmities of old age.—That I am not able to decide, replied Tiberius; but I imagine there are some things that require only the effort of the will to establish them. And if any thing depend upon time, that time is not very remote, when I hope we shall see it dawn upon us with lustre.—My dear Tiberius, said the emperor, your lively genius makes you behold difficulties in a different form than I do. It is my time

\* Pand. lib. i.

now to learn to die, and not to begin a new life, fit only for those who are possessed with such a spirit as yours. I must see the brave old general again; for I would rather indulge a pleasing sadness in his company than suffer the insulting gaiety of those unthinking men about me.



CHAP. XV.

THE emperor did not arrive at the hero's garden till the sun was near setting. Belisarius said, this beautiful orb no longer lights me, but I am still warmed and comforted by its rays; and in it I adore the bounty of the Almighty Creator. Justinian replied, I observe our warrior is filled with the triumphs of religion; to hear such expressions from the brave old man's mouth delights and ravishes me.— Belisarius replied, there is nothing but religion can give comfort to an old blind man. This will give joy under the most severe affliction and trouble. None can give a better testimony to this truth than myself. Overwhelmed with years, deprived of sight, and destitute of friends, abandoned over to myself, and nothing present to my thoughts but the decline of frail

mortality, affliction, and my approaching grave, I have nothing left but to send up my meditations to Heaven: to deprive me of that were, perhaps, to drive me to despair. The good man walks with God; a secret consciousness that he is acceptable to his Creator warms his heart; and from that source he derives strength and rapture even in the midst of affliction. When I was first surrounded with misfortunes, deserted by all, and given up to my enemies, who were plotting my ruin, I have often said to myself, Be of courage, Belisarius; you are free from self-reproach, and your God beholds you. My heart, where all was laid waste and desolate with misery, revived and glowed within me at that reflexion; I felt it expand in my bosom with new life and joy. I hold the same self-conference still; and when my daughter is with me, yielding to the stroke of affliction, and bathing my face with tears; Can you be afraid I ask her, that He who sent us on this stage of life, will cease to prompt, to invigorate, and support us? Your heart is endowed with sensibility, and truth and purest virtue reside there; your father has not more to answer for than yourself; and can you imagine that the Fountain of all goodness will desert that virtue which he loves? Oh! my daughter, come but the moment, when He, that with his breath called



forth my soul into existence, shall command it into his own glorious presence; and then we shall see whether wicked men will follow thither to disturb that state of bliss. My poor daughter Eudoxa listens with fixed attention to this consoling language, and her tears fall as she hears it; but they are tears that flow mingled with delight: and thus by degrees I lead her to consider life as a little voyage, which we perform in a bark not accommodated to our wishes, and therefore with joy we approach the port, where all is peace, delight, and rapture.

You have framed for yourself, said the emperor, a very considerable scheme of religion! —It is the true religion, replied Belisarius. Would you have me contemplate the God whom I adore, in the light of a sullen and offended tyrant, who delights in vengeance only? I know full well that when he is represented to us by men of dark, of jealous, haughty and melancholy tempers, the image of the Deity takes a tincture from the imaginations it has passed through, and a benevolent God is made to appear a cruel, passionate, and irascible being, like the creatures that talk of him. They perhaps find their account in making their own vices the attribute of heaven: But I endeavour to figure to myself the perfections which it is my duty to imitate. Do you think this an error? It is at least an

innocent one. From the hands of my Creator I came forth weak and feeble; he will be indulgent therefore; to him it is apparent that I have neither the madness nor the wickedness to offend him: that infatuation of mind, that impotence of pride is foreign to my heart. To my God I am more dutifully attached, more fervently devoted, than ever I was to the emperor; and of this I am sure, that the emperor, who is but weak erring man, would never have done me harm, if, like my God, he could have read my heart.

ALAS! that God, said Justinian, is, notwithstanding what you have said, a God of wrath; a terrible God!—Yes, to the guilty he is terrible, replied Belisarius; but I am self-acquitted in my own conscience; it tells me I am good and virtuous; and in the same manner that the flagitious soul is incompatible with the essence of the divinity, I have the comfort to think that the soul of the just man is analogous to the fountain of all goodness.—But which of us is the just man, said the emperor?—He that endeavours most to be so, replied Belisarius: for goodness consists altogether in volition.

THAT you delight in the contemplation of your God, said Tiberius, is not surprising, since you behold him in so amiable a light!—Alas! replied the old man, I know how much I am

obliged to strain my feeble powers in order to conceive suitably of the Divine Majesty; and after all the efforts of a limited capacity to form into one complex idea all that is sublime, and beautiful, and good, I am conscious how inadequate the image is at last. But what can a man, who would elevate his thoughts to a notion of his Maker? If that all-wise and incomprehensible Being delights in any thing, it is in the effusion of benevolence to all his creatures: this reflexion paints him to me in the mildest attitudes, and on that idea I therefore dwell, in order to form the most endearing conception of him.

BUT it will not be enough, said the emperor, to define him a benevolent Being: you must call him just also.—They are synonymous words, replied Belisarius. To delight in goodness, and to have a detestation for evil; to reward the former, and to punish the latter, that is the true character of goodness: that is my first, my unalterable principle. Has it never happened to you as it has to me, to attend the levee of Titus, of Trajan, and Antoninus? That is one of the reveries in which my imagination loves to indulge. I fancy myself in that court, composed of the true friends of the crown: I see those illustrious princes dispense the smiles of complacence all around the honest circle; I



see them communicate the beams of glory and of majesty, mixed and blended with such pleasing delicacy and softness, that every heart participates of the joy the sovereign feels in diffusing happiness to others. If that be an august scene, how much more glorious and refulgent will be the court of Him, who is at last to receive my soul! It will be filled with the Titus's, the Trajans, and the Antoninus's, those delights of mankind. It is in their company, and that of the virtuous of all ages and of all countries, that the poor blind Belisarius will glow with purest fire before the throne of a good and equitable God.—And the wicked, said Tiberius, how do you dispose of them?—They will not be there! I shall hope, continued he, to see in that blaze of glory the august and wretched old man who took away my eyes; for he has done much good, from the inclination of his heart; and if he ever did wrong, he was surprised into it. He will rejoice, I believe, to see my lost organs restored to me!—As thus the hero spoke, his whole countenance was irradiated with joy, while the emperor poured floods of tears, reclining upon the breast of Tiberius.

At length his tender sensations giving way to reflexion, Do you hope, said the emperor, to find the pagan heroes in that paradise which has

so enraptured you? \* Do you think they will be admitted?—My good neighbour, replied Belisarius, you do not mean, I am sure, to afflict me in my old age! I am poor and wretched, without any other comfort than that which springs up within me from the scenes of futurity which I have fancied to myself. If it be an error, pray indulge me in it: it cheers my heart, and God is not offended; it enlarges my idea of his benevolence, and I love him more ardently for it. I cannot be induced to think that between my soul and that of Aristides, of Marcus Aurelius and of Cato, there is an eternal abyss of separation; if I thought there were, I feel that my love for the great Author of our existence would be diminished by it.

Young man, said the emperor to Tiberius, while you honour the enthusiastic virtue of this hero, you must not believe him an orthodox guide. Belisarius never pretended to be deeply versed in the mysteries of faith.—And who can be deeply versed, replied the hero? Alas! who can presume to think his eye has

\* It has been decided by the fathers that God will work a miracle, rather than let him perish everlastingly who has faithfully followed the laws of nature. But Justinian, it is well known, was a bigot, and of a persecuting spirit.

pervaded the great scheme of Providence. The all-wise Creator has given us two guides, which ought to operate in concert with each other; and those guides are, the light of faith, and of natural reason. The truth of which we are convinced by intuition, faith will never contradict. Revelation is but a supplement to the light of nature: it is the same voice that speaks to us from the throne of heaven, and from the bottom of the heart. It is impossible that they should be at variance; and if on the one hand, the truth that stirs within me, announces the just and good man to be acceptable to his Creator, I shall never hear on the other, that he is obnoxious to the wrath of heaven.—And who can be answerable, said the emperor, that this inward sentiment is the revelation of nature?—If it be not, replied Belisarius, a just and benevolent God suffers me to be misled, and all is lost. It is the light of natural reason that tells me there is an all-governing mind, that commands me to worship him, and promulgates his laws in my very soul. And will the wise Creator give me by those means an inward conviction, that may prove at last the grossest error? Alas! whoever is my antagonist on these points, I beg him to leave me still my conscience, the light of intuition; it is my guide, and my best



support. Without it, I can no longer distinguish right from wrong, or good from evil: truth and falsehood become indiscriminate, and my duty loses its sanction. I do not even know that there are any duties to bind me: I then am blind indeed; and they who took from me the light of the sun, were by far less barbarous than the man who should extinguish in me the internal light of reason.

LET me ask you, said Justinian, what do you perceive so clearly by this faint, glimmering ray within the mind?—I perceive, replied the hero, that the religion which intimates to me a just and benevolent God, is a true religion; and that whatever is repugnant to that fine inward sentiment, is not of that religion. Shall I avow my principles? I am attached to that religion, because it renders me better, and gives a dignity to my nature. If I felt that it made me haughty, fierce, and hard of heart, I should abjure it at once, and I should say to my God, In the dilemma which obliges me to be either wicked or an unbeliever, I chuse the latter, and am sure it will least offend you.—But happily the religion I embrace, is congenial to my heart. Love God, and love his works: can any thing be more simple, just, and natural? To wish good to

him who does us evil; what a noble morality! how generous and sublime! In our misfortunes, to consider all as a trial of virtue, how sweet and comfortable the philosophy! Thus far I am content; and while I possess this moral system, if mysteries are proposed to me, I acknowledge them above my reason, and I submit, with a sincere compassion for those whose judgment wants the same rectitude and docility; at the same time I recommend them to the supreme goodness of the Father of all, and to the infinite mercy of that omniscient Judge who sees the paths of error, and can forgive it.

IN this way of proceeding, said Justinian, you are going to deal out salvation to numbers without distinction!—And is it necessary, replied Belisarius, that numbers should be in a state of reprobation?—I feel with you, said Justinian, that it is more comfortable to love God, than to fear him; but all nature attests his vengeance, and the rigour of his decrees. —For my part, said Belisarius, I am persuaded that he only punishes when the divine grace cannot be extended; that he is not the origin of evil; that he has formed the best possible system, and has diffused all the good that system was capable of receiving. \* That is my

\* The opinion of the Stoic school, which was adopted

theology. Let it be proposed throughout the world, and it will be found worthy of being embraced with zeal and veneration: the voice of nature will speak aloud in favour of it. Should violence and cruelty arm it with sword and fire; should the rulers of the earth, who profess this religion, with bigot rage bid the fiends of hell over-run the world, and in the name of God excruciate those whom they ought to pity and to love, they will establish one or other of these two propositions; either that their religion is barbarous like themselves, or they give the lie to the doctrine of truth.

You have raised, said Justinian, a serious and important question! To throw somelight upon it, it will be proper to enquire whether a prince has a right to establish throughout his dominions an uniformity of faith, and one general mode of worship. If this right be inherent in the crown, how can it be exerted a- by Leibnitz and other *Optimists*, is here ascribed to Belisarius. God is good, he hath not envied any good to the good man, he hath therefore made the best that could be made. Sen. Epist. Lib. xxv. Whatever is denied could not be given to us. Id. de Benef. Lib. ii. Chap. 28. We have received great things, but we have not received greater things. Ibid. Chap. 29. It is not easy to think that God acts without design: what could be the cause why I am badly treated. Marc. Anton. Lib. vi.



gainst rebellious and stubborn dissenters, but by force and punishments?

As I am making a profession of faith, said Belisarius, I will frankly own, that whatever concerns the good order of society, and has an influence on the manners, is of necessity subject to the jurisdiction of the sovereign, not as the infallible judge of truth and falsehood, but as a magistrate whose province it is to compute the political good or evil that results from the actions of men: and this opinion of mine I found upon this principle, which should be a first principle in every man's creed, namely, That God is the friend of order, and authorizes nothing that can disturb it.—Well then, said the emperor, do you doubt that there is a close and intimate relation between the established faith and the manners?—I acknowledge, replied Belisarius, that there are many truths, by their nature interwoven with the manners; but take this with you, that there are intuitive truths planted by the hand of God in every breast, which no man in his senses will call in question. Whereas the truth of mysteries, which are beyond the reach of the human understanding, and therefore require a revelation, has no connexion with the morals of mankind. For if we consider a moment, we shall perceive, that the all-wise Being has de-

tached his mysteries from the great system of ethics, for purposes the most important to society, namely, that without waiting for a revelation, man should be led by the propensity of his nature, to a moral conduct. And if Providence has thought fit to make the welfare of society, the political happiness of mankind, the fate of empires, and the course of human contingences, altogether independent of the sublime truths of revelation, my question is, Why should not the civil magistrate imitate the dispensations of the Supreme Being? The sovereign should enquire dispassionately whether, by believing or not believing any particular speculative point, mankind would in a moral sense be better or worse, and in a political view, more valuable citizens, or more faithful subjects. This, I will take upon me to say, should be the rule of sovereign authority; and in consequence of it you see what a number of ingenious disputes would be excluded from civil government.

I OBSERVE, said the emperor, that you leave nothing to the superintendence of the magistrate but what essentially concerns the interests of society: and yet among all the important duties of sovereignty, the most sacred of-  
fice surely consists in being the vicegerent of heaven, for the purposes of enforcing the dis-

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pensations of the eternal will.—Ah! let them be vicegerents of almighty goodness, said Belisarius, and they will do well to leave the ministry of vengeance to the demons of hell.—That the darkness of ignorance should be dispelled, and that truth should have its triumph throughout the world, must be allowed, said the emperor, to be coincident with the plan of Infinite Goodness.—Truth cannot fail to triumph, said Belisarius, but it must not be by the arm of flesh. Do you not perceive that, by putting the sword of vengeance into the hand of Truth, you entrust Error with it also? The very possession of that sword will be ever deemed a sufficient authority to wield it without mercy; and, let me add, Persecution will always be on the side of the strongest, and will erect its banners according to the prevalence of opinion, and, as that suggests, will glut itself with the blood of unhappy victims. In this manner, we know, Anastasius persecuted that mode of faith which Justinian now protects. The descendants of men, who were formerly murdered by the spirit of intolerance, have now reversed the scene, and in their turn commit a daily massacre upon the posterity of those, who not long since butchered mankind for the service of another religion. Behold those two princes, who thought to ren-



der themselves acceptable to God by piously murdering their fellow-creatures! Supposing the principle to be right, can either of them be sure that the blood he spilt was that with which God desired to see his altars imbrued? Error has an immensity of space, and Truth is like a mathematical point in the prodigious void. And who has hit that point? Each man assumes that happiness to himself; but upon what proof? If there be the clearest evidence that he is right, can that evidence authorise him to insist, and to insist sword in hand, that mankind should be convinced by it? Persuasion comes from heaven, or it is the work of man. If from heaven, it will bring with it the credentials of its mission; if it be of human origin, it can only claim the authority of reason over the faculties of the understanding. Each man is answerable for his own soul. It is his business, therefore, and his only, to determine the choice upon which the happiness or misery of his future existence depends. You would compel me to think as you do; and if you are mistaken, you see how dear it costs me. As to yourself, the error might have been innocent; will it be innocent to work my ruin? Alas! why is man so arrogant as to set up his own religious creed as a law to others? Millions, who had entertain-

ed a rational system of belief, have been seduced and imposed upon. But let it be even supposed that the zealous religionist is infallible: is it my duty to attach infallibility to any human opinion? God, he will say, enlightens him: let him then charitably pray, that God will favour me in the same manner. But, after all, if this infallibility be assumed upon human evidence, what security has the zealot for himself or for me, whom he has forced into his sect? The only point upon which all theologists agree is, that they do not comprehend the very mysteries they dare to pronounce upon with such peremptory decision: and shall it be a crime in me to doubt, where they do not understand? Let pure and simple faith descend from heaven, and it will be sure of gaining proselytes: but decrees and penal edicts will give two things only to the world, rebels and hypocrites. The brave will rebel, to vindicate the rights of the free born mind, and they will be martyred; cowards will wear the mask of dissimulation; while the fanatics of every sect will be so many tigers let loose upon mankind. Cast an eye upon Theodoric, that wise king of the Goths, whose reign (if we except the latter end of it) was not inferior to the administration of our most virtuous princes. He was of the Arian persuasion; but

so far from desiring to plant his own faith by the destruction of mankind, that he punished the occasional conformity of his favourites with death. "How can I think, he used to say, that you will not betray me, since with a spirit of the basest complaisance you betray him who was adored by your forefathers?—The emperor Constantius thought the same. With him it was never a crime in the subject to be steady in his religious tenets; on the contrary, it was in his eyes a sin of the deepest dye in any courtier to abjure his faith for temporal motives, and betray his soul for the sake of court favour. Would to Heaven, that like them, Justinian had never bent himself to enslave the privilege of thinking! But alas! he suffered himself to be involved in controversies, which can never be ended; and which gave him more trouble than all his illustrious labours. For what were the consequences? Seditions, revolt, and massacres. His own quiet and that of the state was undone.

THE tranquillity of the state, said the emperor, depends upon unity of sentiment.—The expression is equivocal, replied Belisarius, and the constant source of mistake. The minds of men are never in better harmony, than when each individual is at liberty to think



for himself. Do you know whence it is that opinion is jealous, arbitrary, and intolerant? It is owing to the fatal error of sovereigns, in thinking the speculative opinions of mankind of high importance to the state, and distinguishing one dogmatical party with the most partial favours, in prejudice and total exclusion of all the rest. No man is willing to be marked out for contempt, proscribed, and stripped of all his civil rights. Whenever a state is divided into two factions, and one of them engrosses all the advantages of the community, the other, whatever be the cause of dissension, will think itself aggrieved, and the love of their country will give way to resentment and fierceness of spirit. The most frivolous object will become grave and important, as soon as it influences the peace of society. It is that influence, and not the thing itself, which inflames the temper of party. Let a controversy be raised concerning the grains of sand on the sea-shore; to that controversy annex a degree of influence upon the condition of the subject, and it will be managed with as much heat and animosity as any other question. Religious fury is, for the most part, compounded of envy, fierce desire, ambition, pride, hatred, and fanatic vengeance, that tyrannizes with zeal, as if it were commissioned by heaven:

and all these complicated passions are the gods of which sovereigns are made implacable delegates. Were there nothing to be gained on earth by waging war for heaven; were zeal for truth to be deprived of a pious licence to murder all who differ about an hypothesis; were religious enmity no longer allowed to rise upon the ruins of the man it hates; were it restrained from enriching itself with the spoils of the opposite sect, and gaining undue honours and preferments; the spirits of mankind would soon be composed, and all the various parties would be left to dogmatise after their own fashion.

AND so the cause of God would be abandoned, said Justinian.—The cause of God, replied Belisarius, wants no enthusiasts to support it. Is it owing to polemical divinity that the sun rises, and the stars glitter in the firmament? Truth shines with its own pure genuine lustre, and the understandings of men are not enlightened by burning the faggots of persecution. The actions of mankind are committed by heaven to the jurisdiction of sovereigns; but to judge of the inward sentiment, is a right reserved for the great Searcher of hearts. That Truth has not chosen princes for its arbitrators will be perfectly plain, if we

consider, that not one of them is exempt from error.

If the liberty of thinking, said the emperor, must not be limited, the liberty of acting will soon claim the same immunity.

THERE can be no danger of it, replied Belisarius: it is in that respect that man is under the immediate controul of the civil power; and while that power confines itself within the limits of law and natural justice, it will have the less occasion for force to maintain its own dignity, and the good order of society. The basis of authority is justice; remove the latter, and the former falls to the ground. I want to know by what arts of illusion is mortal man to deify himself, and induce his fellow-creatures to be duped by the monstrous apotheosis to such a depth of infatuation, as to let him, sword in hand, command mankind to believe what he believes, and think what he thinks? Ask the commanders of the army, whether the logic of the sword has ever convinced the world? Bid them tell you what were the effects of violence and rigour against the Vandals? I was in Sicily; Salomon arrived in the extremity of despair: "All is over in Africa," said he; the Vandals have revolted; Carthage is taken, and they have committed the vil-



“est ravage: within the walls and round the  
 “country all is a deluge of blood; and this  
 “horrible confusion is owing to certain pole-  
 “mical zealots, who do not understand them-  
 “selves, and of course never can be reconcil-  
 “ed. If the emperor will mix himself thus  
 “in abstract sophistry, and publish his edicts  
 “in support of subtleties which he does not  
 “comprehend, let him put his irrefragable doc-  
 “tors at the head of his armies: for my part I  
 “resign: they have driven me beyond all pati-  
 “ence.” Thus that brave man declared his  
 sentiments: between ourselves he was in the  
 right. There are passions enough incident  
 to human nature for the disquiet of the world,  
 without having the torch of discord lighted up  
 by fanaticism.

And who, enquired the emperor, shall  
 quench the flames of discord?—The nature  
 of the human mind will quench the flame, re-  
 turned Belisarius: for casuists will grow tired  
 at last of skirmishing about propositions men  
 cannot understand, and cavilling about distinc-  
 tions none have leisure to attend to. At first  
 indeed, new fangled opinions excited curiosity,  
 and that curiosity encouraged the eagerness  
 of disputation. Take away from controversy  
 all importance in the eyes of the world, and  
 it will soon be out of fashion: men in that case

will endeavour to distinguish themselves by something different from an idle hypothesis. I compare these polemical bigots to a set of champions in the public games, who would embrace one another in perfect good humour if left to themselves; but being gazed at by the multitude, they cut one another's throats.

To avow the truth, said Tiberius, his reasonings have almost convinced me.—What troubles me, said the emperor, is, that upon this system the zeal of a prince can render no service to religion.

HEAVEN preserve me, returned Belisarius, from doing that mischief. I leave him the surest means of serving the interests of religion, by making the soundness of his faith appear from the purity of his morals; and by holding forth the tenour of his government, as an evidence, and indeed as a pledge for the truth that governs his actions. By making men happy it is easy to make proselytes. A good and upright king has a more powerful empire over the hearts of men, than all the pious friends of persecution collected together. It is indeed easier and more expeditious to cut men's throats than to persuade them: but if bigot kings were to raise their voice to the Most High, with this question, What arms

would you have us employ to make you adored upon earth? and if God would deign to make himself heard, the answer would be, *display your virtues.*

As soon as the emperor had called in his scattered thoughts, and composed himself, and called to mind the enthusiastic violence, the pride, and the unrelenting animosity of the religious sectaries that surrounded him, and the counsels they had given him, he broke out into a rapture. What a difference is here! A man grown grey in the art of war, exhibiting a soul filled with benevolence, humanity, and meekness; and those, who would be deemed the ministers of the God of peace, preach nothing but implacable revenge! Alas! how often have I given way to a false zeal, which is no better than tyranny over the understandings of mankind! What a contrast is here between the old hero and me! he is pious and just, loves his God, and wishes him adored by all; he only desires, that all homage paid to the Divine Being, should proceed from a convinced mind and a heart full of love.





## C H A P. XVI.

**T**HE emperor and Tiberius in their journey the next day to the residence of Belisarius, were brought into the most imminent danger, which they had not foreseen; and their deliverance was reserved by providence, to make the character of the brave old general shine with the greater lustre.

THE Bulgarians, who had only retreated near the foot of a mountain in Upper Thrace, having intelligence that their pursuers had entered into quarters, and all the country was quiet, they resolved to make another excursion into Justinian's dominions. For this reason they detached several parties; one of which, had near reached the retreat of Belisarius, when they perceived a carriage approaching, which filled them with the hopes of a good booty. They immediately surrounded it, and took the emperor and Tiberius prisoners. The plunderers, upon their giving up all their money, spared their lives, but still demanded a larger sum for their ransom. They were going to lead them into captivity. The emperor prevailed upon them to conduct them to

the place they were going, when their full ransom should be paid. Assuring them at the same time, that they had no reason to apprehend any danger from falling into the hands of their enemies.

THE manner in which this was delivered had such an influence upon the commander of the Bulgarians, that he demanded where they would be conducted to. Near six miles, replied the emperor, to the castle of Belisarius. The Bulgarian was struck with the sound, and said, are you acquainted with that illustrious hero? The emperor replied, yes; he is my friend. If it be so, we will accompany you thither; and you do not need to make yourselves in the least uneasy.

BELISARIUS, on the first notice of their arrival, imagined they came to carry him off a second time; and his daughter, with tears, with shrieks, and the utmost consternation, clasped him in her arms, My father, said she, Oh! my father! must we part again?

IN this instant word was brought, that the court-yard was filled with an armed force, that stood in formidable ranks round a carriage. Belisarius made his appearance: and the chief of the Bulgarians immediately accosting him, Illustrious hero, said he, here are two men who claim an acquaintance with you, and call

you their friend.—What are their names, said Belisarius?—I am Tiberius, said the young man, and my father is made a prisoner with me.—Oh! yes, I know them, exclaimed Belisarius; they are my neighbours, and my good friends. But you that lead them hither, by what right have you laid hands on them? Who and what are you? We are Bulgarians, said the chief, and the right of war is our claim. But every thing gives way to the esteem we have for you. We should but ill serve a prince who honours you, if we failed in respect to those whom you acknowledge. Thou wonderful man! your friends are free, and to you they are indebted for their liberty.

AT these words, the emperor and Tiberius made an effort to raise their arms and embrace Belisarius: the hero felt the chains which restrained them; and how, said he, your hands bound in captivity! and he unfettered them immediately.

ASTONISHMENT, joy, surprize, and wonder together rose and throbbed wildly in the bosom of Justinian. Oh! virtue, said he to himself, powerful virtue! what an irresistible empire is thine! a poor blind old man, surrounded with wretchedness, commands respect from kings! wrests the sword from the hands



of barbarians, and frees from chains the man who—Gracious God! if the universe beheld the shame that covers me! Alas! it would be too mild a punishment!

THE Bulgarians were desirous to return the booty they had seized: By no means, said the emperor, keep it all as a gift, and rest assured that I shall also add the ransom we had stipulated.

THE Bulgarian chief, in taking leave of Belisarius, asked if he had any commands for the king his master. Tell him it is my constant prayer to heaven, said Belisarius, that so valiant a prince may be the ally and the friend of my sovereign.

OH! Belisarius, exclaimed Justinian now recovered from his confusion and surprize, Oh, Belisarius! what an ascendant have you gained over the hearts of men! The very enemies of the empire esteem and love you!—Do not wonder, said the hero with a smile, at the interest I have with the Bulgarians. I am upon good terms with their king; and but a few days since we supped together.—Where was that, said Tiberius?—In the king's own tent, replied the hero; I forgot to mention that adventure. As I was on my journey hither, I was, like you, made a prisoner, and conducted to the barbarian camp. Their king gave me a

generous reception, entertained me handsomely, and lodged me for the night under his own pavilion: the next day I obtained from him a guard, to convey me safe back to the place where I fell into the hands of a roving party.—How, said Justinian, the king of Bulgaria know you, and not detain you with him?—He was inclined to do it, returned the hero, but his designs and my principles did not correspond with each other. He talked to me of taking my revenge. Who? I revenge myself? A mighty cause indeed for involving a whole country in flames! I returned him thanks, as you may imagine, for the offer of his assistance; and now, you see, he has conceived an esteem for me!

OH! what remorse, what eternal bitter remorse for the soul of Justinian, said Justinian himself, should he ever know to what a cruel excess his ingratitude has been carried! Where shall he find a friend like you whom he has thus basely injured? Alas! he is unworthy of any man's regard after this outrage, this horrible injustice!

Do not exaggerate the matter, returned Belisarius; fester not the wounds of an aged emperor, but rather respect his years and his misfortunes. He was surprized into that proceeding against me, and I will give you a little

history of the business. There are three remarkable æras in the progress of my ruin. The first was my entry into Carthage. Being master of Gilimer's palace, the use I made of his throne was to convert it into a tribunal of justice. In so doing, my intention was to give weight and dignity to the laws: my inward sentiment was not legible to common eyes; and when a man seats himself on a throne, he will naturally enough have the appearance of trying how he likes it. That was an indiscretion: but it was not the only one I committed. A very whimsical kind of curiosity prompted me to dine at Gilimer's table, after the fashion of the Vandals, and I was served, in the usual manner of that court, by the officers of the king. It was concluded, that I had a mind to succeed to the vacant throne, and appearances gave some colour to it. A report of this soon reached the imperial palace. In order to counterwork the effect of it, I desired to be recalled, and Justinian recompensed my fidelity by a magnificent triumph. Gilimer, with his wife and children, together with all the accumulated treasure, which for a series of years the Vandals had ravished from the nations round them, adorned the splendid pomp. The emperor received me in the Circus, and when from the throne, on which he was e-



levated amidst the acclamations of a people almost without number, he stretched forth his hand to his subject, with that air of majesty and sweetness, my heart exulted within me; and I said to myself: This day's example will be productive of many heroes: Justinian knows the art of kindling emulation and inflaming the mind to glory: the honour of serving him will now be a prize contended for. But alas! the triumph, which was to ensure prosperity to the prince, began already to prepare for me a reverse of fortune! From that very moment Envy stood with her bow bent against me.

A course of victory for five years together, it is true, made it necessary even for Envy to keep some measures of decency: but provoked at last beyond all patience by the success that attended me, she dared to shew herself openly without any sense of shame.

THE Goths were chased out of Italy, and had thrown themselves into Ravenna: I laid siege to the place. It was their only refuge; and there pent up, it was impossible for them to escape. Envy whispered to the emperor that Ravenna was impregnable, that his army would all perish before the town, in pursuit of my schemes of vain glory; and in conse-

quence, when the Goths were upon the point of surrendering, ambassadors from Justinian arrived with proffered terms of peace. I saw that the emperor had been imposed upon, and I thought it would be treachery on my part to lose the opportunity of making Italy our own; I therefore declined to ratify the conditions of peace; the town capitulated, and I was accused of treason and revolt. The charge had some foundation, as you perceive; for I had been guilty of disobedience, and there was still something more in it. The enemy were disaffected to their king, and made me a tender of their crown. A peremptory refusal might embitter their minds; I returned a flattering answer, and that seeming acquiescence was deemed sincere at court. I was recalled, and the prompt obedience with which I laid down the command disconcerted my enemies. To the emperor's feet I led that very Gothic king, whose crown I was said to be ambitious of. This time a triumph was not allowed me. I felt myself sorely mortified on the occasion. I do not mean to say that I was humbled in the sight of the people: far from it: my retinue had sufficient pomp, and the acclamations of the public, who pressed in crowds about me, would have satisfied a more aspiring vanity than mine. But the cold reception I met

with from the emperor, more than hinted to me that he was not undeceived, and that a latent suspicion was in secret still at work against me. Unluckily the impression made upon his mind was not a little aggravated by the enthusiastic admiration of the people; whose idol I had the misfortune to be.

AND now, in a dispassionate manner, put yourselves in the place of the emperor; consider the prejudices that had been infused into his heart. Should not you have been piqued at the praise which reproached yourself? Do you think the supposed ambition of a subject, extolled to the very skies, would not have given you umbrage? Should you not have seen with spleen and resentment a whole people, wild with joy, and in the transport of their hearts taking revenge against yourself, even to a malice of enjoyment, by giving me a popularity superior to the triumph that had been refused? Could you have shut your ear to the whispers of a court commenting upon the insult offered to majesty, by the tumult of applause that followed Belisarius? My good neighbour, the greatest prince is but mere man; they are all jealous of their power and their splendor; and if Justinian had not had vigour enough to subdue the little passions of his heart, and to pardon the merit which pro-



yoked him, it would have been by no means a matter of wonder. And yet the emperor did conquer his jealousies: he controuled the weaknesses of vanity and suspicion, and once more confided to me the command of his armies and the defence of the state. But another incident occurred which gave a byass to his judgment, and made me the object of his fixed aversion.

I HAD finished my career; and Narses, who succeeded me in Italy, alleviated all the pains of my own inactivity by the victories he obtained over the enemies of my country. In this situation I imagined I had nothing left but to close the last scene of life in tranquillity, when of a sudden the Huns made an irruption into Thrace, and ravaged all the country round. The emperor deigned to recollect that I was still in being, and in my old days I was charged with the command of an expedition, by the event of which the empire was saved from ruin. I covered my grey hairs and the furrows of my forehead with an helmet, crusted over with ten years rust. \* Fortune proved favourable, and

\* Whilst the city was disturbed with a very great tumult, Belisarius, formerly a most famous general, although now bent with age, is sent by the emperor against the enemy. And he indeed with wonderful promptitude of mind performed the office of a young man. For that was the last engagement he was employed in; nor did he acquire less glory in that affair, than in his victory many years before over the Vandals and Goths. Agathias, lib. 5.

I repulsed the Huns, who were advanced within a few miles of the capital. I laid an ambush for the enemy, and it succeeded so well that I was regarded by the people as a guardian god. The whole city at my return, was one wild uproar of joy and exultation, to such a degree that I was much alarmed at the fatal consequences, which I then foresaw : but how to appease the violence of the populace? The emperor was old, and age brings infirmities with it. The honours paid me by the multitude, and the excess of applause that rung throughout the city, were understood by Justinian as marks of disaffection, plainly indicating that his subjects were tired of his reign, and wished to see him abdicate his throne in favour of the general who defended it. Mistrust and jealousy took possession of him; and without alledging any thing against me, he judged it right to remove so dangerous a man from his presence. While I passed my time in obscurity, a plot against the crown was discovered; and the conspirators, without detecting their principal, died in the agony of torture. But the silence of those unhappy men was interpreted by my enemies, and Calumny furnished out a copious supplement. I was ordered into confinement; discontent spread among all ranks of men, till at length, touched with compassion for all my sufferings, the people ex-

pressed their feelings without reserve. Pity was soon inflamed to indignation, and by a general revolt the emperor was compelled to give me up to the clamours of my country. In depriving me of my eyes, I am persuaded, he thought he was disarming an enemy. That I was never disaffected to him, heaven can bear me witness: but heaven, that reads the hearts of men, has not given that power to princes. You accuse the emperor of ingratitude and injustice; but it was his misfortune, and not his crime, to believe appearances, which perhaps would have misled your judgment in the same manner.

YES, he is miserable, the most miserable of men, said Justinian, throwing his arms about the hero, and clasping him in his embrace.—What means this burst of anguish? enquired Belisarius.—It is the agony of a heart ready to break, said Justinian: Oh! Belisarius! that unjust master, that barbarous tyrant, who rent your eyes from their sockets, and reduced you thus to misery and want, in bitterness of sorrow and repentance, now embraces you, and throws himself thus upon you with all the compunction of sensibility and love.—Thou my sovereign! exclaimed Belisarius.—Yes, I am he! Oh! my friend! my deliverer! my protector! Yes, thou best of men, yes, I am that unhappy prince,



who has set the world an example of the basest cruelty and ingratitude. Let me thus prostrate at your feet, be humbled to that depth of lowness which my guilt deserves. I here forget my crown, dishonoured as it is by the vilest crimes; I am unworthy to wear it longer. Nothing now befits me, but thus to bathe the dust under your feet with my tears, and hide my opprobrious head, thus overwhelmed with shame and infamy.

AND will you thus, said the hero, supporting his master, who was almost suffocated with sighs and tears; and will you thus, said Belisarius, folding the emperor in his arms, abandon yourself to despair? Shall the sense of a past error take away the power of atoning for it? Oh! my master, you are plunging yourself in shame and distraction, as if you were the first man deceived by appearances, and seduced by calumny! Though your error were even a crime, yet why degrade yourself thus? Wherefore be humbled to an abject wretch, a thing vile and abhorred? You are my sovereign still; resume your strength, nor let the recollection of an unguarded moment rob you of a due reverence for yourself, and the true spirit of virtue. In this consternation of your heart, reflect upon all the good you have done mankind, and let that reflexion counterbalance the mis-

take of sudden impetuosity. Belisarius is indeed blind; but nations are freed by your patriot toil from the yoke of barbarians; the calamities of the empire are all repaired by your princely beneficence; and thirty years of glorious struggle for the good of mankind have proved to the universe, that Justinian was not a tyrant. Belisarius is blind; but he forgives you: and if you desire to repair the injury you have done him, the means are easy and in your power. Grant me only one of the many prayers and vows I offer up for the peace of the world, and I have full atonement.

Come then, said the emperor, snatching him eagerly to his heart, come, my friend! my genius! and my guide! Oh! come, and teach me to expiate my guilt! Come and exhibit it to my court in all its striking colours: and let your presence, while it is a living memorial of my crime, be a proof of my repentance also.

In vain did the hero use every intreaty to be left in solitude: to appease the anguish of the emperor's mind, he was obliged to comply with his request, and promise to accompany him. The consent of Belisarius thus obtained, Oh! what a debt, said Justinian to Tiberius, what an unspeakable debt do I now owe thee, thou good young man! What recompence can equal thy signal virtues for the service they have done

me?—It is true, my sovereign, you are not rich enough, replied Tiberius, to requite me as I wish. Give it in charge to Belisarius to make me retribution. Poor as he is, he is yet master of a treasure which I prefer to all imperial gifts.—My only treasure is my daughter, said Belisarius, and I cannot dispose of her better. With these words the hero called for Eudoxa. My daughter, said he, fall on your knees to your sovereign, and solicit his approbation of your nuptial union with the virtuous Tiberius. At the name and sight of Justinian, the first emotion of nature in the heart of the hero's daughter, was mixed with dread and horror. A sudden shriek burst from her; she started back, and turned aside with detestation. Justinian advanced towards her. Condescend, Eudoxa, said he, to listen to me; deign to look upon me, and you will see a penitent almost drowned in his own tears; in bitter tears that gush from the keenest anguish, and will never dry their channels till I descend in sorrow to my grave. Not this copious stream, not all the good I have done, can blot out the memory of my guilt; but Belisarius has pardoned me; and now, Eudoxa, now prove yourself his daughter, by granting me your forgiveness too.

THE lovely Eudoxa being given in marriage



to Tiberius, gave a great deal of pleasure to the emperor, and removed a part of the grief that he had been loaded with for the hard and unmerited usage Belisarius had met with.

THIS sudden revolution disconcerted the intrigues of the court; and when Belisarius arrived, all the courtiers were put into the greatest hurry and confusion. Behold, said the emperor, the upright hero you made me persecute to his undoing; be gone therefore from my presence for ever. I am fully persuaded of his innocence, and esteem him for the many virtues he possesses. Your lives are therefore now in his power. His enemies were seized with the utmost anguish; affright and terror seized the breasts of every one of them. This change of fortune did not elate our illustrious hero; he used his power with the emperor to procure all their pardons, recommending it also to him to punish all future delinquents with the utmost rigour. During the remainder of his life he was favoured with the confidence of his prince; and mankind would have reaped the benefits of his advancement, but Providence soon snatched him away. The emperor being quite worn out with distress and trouble, attended the obsequies of his faithful general; but no

sooner the hero's funeral was over, than all his  
good counsels were despised and forgot.

that he had been treated with for the last and  
unhappy end of Belisarius had not with

less been treated with the same

of the court; and when Belisarius ar-

ived, all the courtiers were put into the great

of luxury and dissipation. Belisarius, still the same

THE END

to his country; he gave therefore from my

perfection of art. I am fully persuaded of his

instructed and esteem him for the many vir-

in his power. Your lives are therefore now

in his power. The courtiers were joined with

the virtues of the court. The change

of fortune and of the illustrious hero;

healed his power with the emperor to procure

all their power, recommending it also to

him to grant all favors desired with the

of his

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like he was favored with the confidence of his

grace; and would have received the

benefits of his advancement for Providence con-

tinued him many. The emperor being quite

worn out with labors and trouble, needed

the assistance of his faithful general; but no

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